

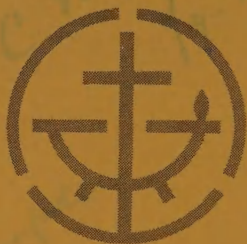
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DWELLERS IN TENTS

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Fredric E. Dechamst

# DWELLERS IN TENTS

AND OTHER SERMONS

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BY

FREDERIC E. DEWHURST

PASTOR OF PLYMOUTH CHURCH

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

INDIANAPOLIS AND KANSAS CITY

THE BOWEN-MERRILL COMPANY

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TO MY WIFE  
WHOSE CONSTANT INSPIRATION  
AND  
COMPANIONSHIP OF SPIRIT  
HAVE  
MADE WHAT IS WORTHIER IN THIS BOOK  
ALREADY HERS  
IT IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED



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# I

## DWELLERS IN TENTS

*Jer.* xxxv. 7.—All your days ye shall dwell in tents.

THE life of the tent describes the nomadic and pastoral phase of human existence. It is that period of life when the balance between man and nature is on the side of nature. Environment is stronger than the spirit within man. He is dependent on nature and follows her about. The time comes at length when he masters nature, triumphs over her forces, asserts himself and makes nature come to him. Civilization begins when the scale tips in that direction ; when man, instead of nature, is master of the situation.

But although the nomadic life is a passing phase in the process of human history, although a wider civilization asserts itself against it and wipes it out, we can, never-

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theless, look back upon it, feel its beauty and realize its quiet strength. Its attraction to us lies in its simplicity, its artlessness, its lack of fevered anxiety and care. The tent is pitched where grass is fresh and sweet, and when the flocks and herds have cropped it close, the happy nomads know that in an hour they can put their transient city on the backs of camels and seek new pasturage beside the still waters where the herbage is yet fresh and tender; and when the circle is complete the journey will begin again. It is a perpetually moving city; the roots of life can not strike deep into the soil; it is not a condition where the permanent arts of life can flourish; nor amid such scenes can the heart of man be torn asunder over the social problems. The wants of man are few; his passions and desires are elemental; his aspirations are bounded by the circle which his herds are able to graze. The one word which describes it all is "temporariness"; its watchword is,—“We have here no continuing city.”

I have taken a text this morning out

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of the nomadic life ; but the words were spoken at the time of a highly developed civilization ; they are words of protest and reaction. The prophet Jeremiah had brought certain representatives of the Rechabites before him, had set wine before them and tried to persuade them to drink. But the Rechabites were total abstainers ; and their abstinence was only one element in their protest against civilization itself ; for civilization in their eyes meant luxury, effeminateness and corruption. They tell Jeremiah that they had always faithfully kept the commandment of the founder of their order, not only to drink no wine, but to “ build no houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any ” ; and to “ dwell in tents all their days.” They declared that they had obeyed all these directions except, when Nebuchadnezzar came conquering into the land, they had, through fear of the Chaldeans and Syrians, sought temporary refuge in Jerusalem.

Then Jeremiah made their fidelity and obedience a text for reproof of the Jews, drunk with luxury and ease. He takes this

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reaction into a life of nomadic simplicity as a means of rebuking the lethargy and corruption which he, in common with all the prophets, so keenly perceived in the life around him.

As an incident of history this seems somewhat remote from us. Even the Rechabites with their fidelity and abstinence seem a little beyond the pale of our immediate interests. But there is one phrase which comes echoing down the years and is prophetic of our human experience beyond the immediate intent of the words themselves,—“All your days ye shall dwell in tents.” A thought is hidden in these words which haunts the mind as descriptive of human history and experience in some of their deeper meanings.

Let us remind ourselves once more what is symbolized by dwelling in tents. It is the temporary as against the permanent aspect of life; it is the picture of mankind on the eternal march, contrasted with the picture of mankind settled down to the ease and comfort of fixed habitations. The tent life is subject to the conditions which



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surround it. The life of the "continuing city" has subjected those conditions to itself. The life of the tent contains within itself the initiative of movement; the life of the fixed habitation must first of all overcome the inertia of its own repose and permanence.

We shall try to see whether this describes a truth of human experience; but before doing so let us be sure that we do not confuse this thought with two other thoughts which have some kinship with it.

There is, first of all, the despondent rejection of life because it contains the elements of illusion and change. The spirit of melancholy and despair has touched many of the finest souls of the present age, and has smitten the strings of their harps into silence or subdued them into minor strains. One can not truly interpret certain great phases of the art and literature of this age until he realizes that many have been profoundly touched with this sense of the transientness of life, of life not merely in the form of personal existence, but in its great ideals, its convictions and faiths.

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“From scarped cliff and quarried stone  
She cries ‘a thousand types are gone:  
I care for nothing, all shall go,’ ”

is the lament of one ; while another takes  
up the mournful chant in a different strain :

“Now he is dead ! Far hence he lies  
In the lorn Syrian town ;  
And on his grave, with shining eyes,  
The Syrian stars look down.”

The despondency of life which touches the finer spirits of the race sifts down at length into the general life. Lamentations over the disappointments and illusions of life are heard from many voices, from all sorts and conditions of life. “This is just the trouble,” many are saying always, “there is nothing certain about this life ; nothing to be relied upon ; nothing fixed and permanent. Yes, it is the fact ; we do dwell in tents all our days. We are at the mercy of the pitiless forces of this strange and changing world.”

Here, then, is one way of applying this doctrine to life ; the result is the paralysis of strength, the defeat of endeavor.

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Another use of the doctrine is described by the word *asceticism*. Let us clearly understand what asceticism is ; let us not confuse it with any past form in which it has expressed itself, such as monasticism. The root meaning of asceticism is discipline ; the Greek *Askesis*, from which the word is derived, was the discipline of the Greek athlete for the race. But in history and usage the fundamental idea of asceticism has been repression and privation ; it is the negative discipline of life ; it is the surrender of some elements of life in order that the remaining elements may be saved and nourished the better.

Now the ascetic ideal also rests upon the belief that we dwell in tents ; that we have here no continuing city. Its earlier expressions took the form of contempt for the flesh and for the world ; sought retirement and solitude in order that the soul might be trained through prayer and vigils, through fasts and discipline, for its celestial home. This is the picture brought most naturally before us when we think of asceticism ; it is

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“other-worldliness”; it is a refined and sublimated selfishness.

But the ascetic spirit may linger after this individual form of saving one's own soul has been rejected; it does survive in many forms of doing good to others, the motive to which is of the noblest and most unselfish character. The impulse of the old spirit is so strong upon the world that generous hearts, even after they have come to see that life is not for the purpose of getting one's own soul out of the world, but is for service, still imagine that there is a radical conflict between individual welfare and service of others; sacrifice of self still means repression of self, means the belief that the good and beneficent use of life for one's self must be surrendered, if good is to come to other lives. This is indeed a strange survival of the ascetic ideal, but we can not fail to recognize it in many of the best meant and most devoted kinds of human service.

There is, to be sure, oftentimes a temporary and superficial conflict between the individual and the general good, but there

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can be no radical and real conflict. Mr. Lowell stated the relation of these two things in terms of profound insight, when he thus summed up the meaning of the vision of Sir Launfal :

“Not what we *give* but what we *share*,  
For the gift without the giver is bare.”

“Not what we give, but what we share,” that is the doctrine of the New Humanity, of the better philanthropy. The sacrifice of self which leaves self poorer, the rejection of the wealth of beauty, light, knowledge, all the great gains of life through the ages, in order that other men may be pulled up into what is thought to be a saving of them,—this may be infinitely noble and generous, but it still has in it elements of the old ascetic ideal, the ideal of repression and contempt. It is what we share, not what we surrender, that uplifts the life of those whom we would help. The claiming of our birthright that we may have wherewith to ennoble other life; the glad acceptance of every good gift that cometh down from the Father of light, but the acceptance

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of it as something to be held for all,—this is the real sacrifice, this is the final service. In that faith man may go forth with the rejuvenated watchword of the followers of Huss,—“The cup for all ; the cup for all.”

Let us not misunderstand it. I do not mean that a generous soul, fired with the love of service, can live in a calculating spirit, or submit every deed to a quantitative analysis to make sure that nothing goes out in service for which an equivalent to self is not seen on its way to take the place of the good deed ; but there can be no enduring motive for bringing light and beauty and enlargement of life to others, except upon the pre-supposition that what is good for others is good for ourselves ; Jesus was wise enough to plant his ethics upon the principle, which is echoed in Sir Launfal's vision, when He said : “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The word “as,” the shortest word in the sentence, is the pivot upon which the doctrine of Christ hangs. “Thy neighbor *as* thyself.” You are not to throw away any good ; but you are to claim all good as your own, and then that

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good, by God's grace and love, you shall share. Not repression and surrender, but expansion and self-realization; the universal hunger of heart and mind fed from the bounty of God's generous table and that bounty shared and the loaves distributed through the eternal miracle of generous hearts until the multitude is fed,—this is the second table of the law.

The gentle and unassuming woman who told us the story of Hull House the other night, said one thing almost as an aside, so unostentatiously was it said, yet the whole significance of the Settlement idea is disclosed in that remark, namely: that the people who went there did not leave behind them the acquisitions of knowledge, art, culture and refinement, but took these things with them in order that through a natural social intercourse they might share them.

Is not this the key to a new and more effective type of social service? The Settlement is not essential to it; it is only an incidental illustration. Yet it is a revival of the principle of service laid down by Christ.

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The ascetic ideal and practice are not his ; they are the perversion of his idea through the temporary triumph of oriental ideas of life.

But let us now return to the main consideration. In what sense is the dwelling in tents symbolical of some of the deepest and most permanent conditions of our life ?

To begin with what is most external and perhaps most apparent, the universe itself is the greatest nomad we know anything about ; not in the sense that the countless orbs of which it is composed are forever revolving in closed cycles upon which they return and return again, but in the sense that the life of the universe from lowest to highest forms has been a constant forsaking of exhausted and imperfect conditions for those more fresh and significant. "A thousand types are gone," indeed, although the inference of despair is not the true inference to draw from that admitted fact.

But how evident to us is this "unhasting, unresting" movement of the natural world since first the creative word was spoken that began to organize the void and form-



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less waste into a universe! What seeming prodigality and waste! What laborious effort to create a type which at the moment of its perfection is thrown aside, that a still better may be created! It all seems like a fulfillment of the formula of the old Greek philosopher Heraclitus,—“All things are fleeting; the devouring fire is their symbol!”

So it seems as if this primeval, nomadic impulse had been imparted to the universe itself, and that the law by which it has developed, by which its ceaseless development is still proceeding, were but one gigantic illustration of these words,—“Ye shall dwell in tents all your days.” There is nothing static, nothing permanent in the forms which the universe has taken on; the only permanent element is the unity of purpose which directs it to the far-off end.

But to come within the circle of our human experience, is it not evident that in the domain of our intellectual life, in our interpretation of the world in terms of thought, we and our fathers have dwelt in tents all the days of our lives? We arrive

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at no final and inclusive interpretation of life. It almost seems as if we could hear nature saying again, "a thousand *creeds* are gone, I care for nothing, all shall go."

There are two views of life which through the ages have struggled with each other for supremacy ; the two are skepticism and dogmatism. Skepticism, laying hold of this evident fact of the temporary element in life, of the constant overturning of opinion, change of view, reconstruction of philosophies and theologies, declares that nothing can be permanent ; that there is no abiding knowledge of anything ; that we must forever wander between two worlds "one dead, the other powerless to be born." It regards illusion as identical with delusion, and begs man to settle down contentedly into the narrow circle of the things that are positive, and live his life out among them.

Dogmatism, on the other hand, in frantic effort to find some anchorage for the spirit, some permanent hold for the mind upon truth, drives down its own artificial stakes ; it creates an authority for man to tie him-

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self up to; and always raises the cry of "No fair," when the validity of its self-constituted authority is called in question. If you ask what the world rests upon, it tells you confidently,—Upon the back of the tortoise; and if you ask what the tortoise rests upon, it as confidently replies,—Upon the back of the elephant. But if you ask what the elephant rests upon, dogmatism retorts that this is an ultimate question and you have no right to ask it. Dogmatism insists that we must have a permanent habitation, must dwell in a continuing city; skepticism says,—Behold the ruins of all your cities; they are all razed to the ground; a thousand creeds are gone; they all shall go.

Now the answer to skepticism and dogmatism alike lies hidden in this symbolic fact of life. We dwell in tents; for a temporary interpretation of life, a temporary formulation of truth does not mean the futility of interpreting life or of seeking truth, any more than the scaffolding built about the rising walls of the cathedral implies that the cathedral is the flimsy structure of

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an hour. Our knowledge is temporary indeed ; our religious and social creeds are conjectures of the truth, hints and surmises of what is ever greater than our power to formulate. It is as Paul said, "We know in part; we prophesy (or surmise) in part." Our knowledge is the scaffolding around the growing building which we must allow neither skepticism to identify with the building itself, nor dogmatism to nail and rivet together as if the scaffolding itself were permanent. The temporariness of our knowledge is in reality a witness to the permanence of that which knowledge tries to compass ; it is "a beam in darkness ; let it grow." The bread we eat to-day does not satisfy our hunger to-morrow. All food is temporary and must be renewed, but it is conclusive evidence of a permanent hunger which it has power to satisfy.

When I look back on this bewildering, changing history of human thought, see creed displacing creed, opinion taking the place of opinion, faiths moving on, disappearing, emerging in transformed conditions, it seems to me the most inspiring

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thing I know anything about. The very temporariness of it is itself the witness to the kinship between the spirit of man and the spirit of God ; it betokens man's hold upon the absolute and eternal ; he moves along with it, and as his spirit expands it casts off the shells which once provided an ample abode.

“Dwelling in tents” !—that is no Pyrrhonism ; no denial of the power to know and to have companionship with the Infinite. The ancient nomads were conditioned by their surroundings ; but they were not fools ; they knew where pasturage was and they followed after it with their flocks. And the man who follows the Shepherd of the universe may be led in devious ways, follow along unknown regions, but he will be led into green pastures and beside the still waters. “We know in part,” that was the final word of Paul, the word of reverent Christian agnosticism ; for who can conceive this great world of matter or spirit in so small a way that he will not exclaim at every stage in his career, “His greatness is unsearchable and his ways past

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finding out " ! The bane of life, the poison of its secret fountains, is indeed a radical skepticism, such a skepticism as persuades man he can know absolutely nothing about the great and permanent realities ; but dogmatism is the stone offered in the place of bread, the scorpion for the fish. The sweet and satisfying bread which nourishes and strengthens is the spirit of teachableness, openness of mind and heart, willingness to disbelieve keeping faithful company with the desire to believe.

Skepticism which denies that we can know anything of the great realities ; dogmatism, which is sure that we know it all ; teachableness which is eager to exchange its ignorance for knowledge, its partial knowledge for more complete,—these are the three possible attitudes to life ; but it is teachableness alone which dwells in tents all its days ; it has no continuing city, but it has continuing pasturage and its soul is satisfied.

But finally there is an attitude to life which gives it the sense of stability and permanence, the permanence as of " a city which

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hath foundations ;” for after all is said man’s search for truth is not the noblest thing about man’s life ; it is very noble, but there is one thing that is nobler still. Did I say that Paul spoke his final word when he said : “ We know in part ? ” No, it is not his final word, for he went on to say that there are three things which in the midst of all this change and movement of life do not change, they abide. These three are faith, hope and love.

What does it teach us but this—that it is not the intellectual attitude to life but the practical attitude that is after all the main thing? Life is not an abstract problem ; it is a throbbing and concrete reality. It is, therefore, to be solved not in terms of abstract knowledge, but of concrete faith and courage, hope and endurance and love.

Will you have life clear and real to you? Will you have it a permanent and solid fact? Knowledge vanishes away, but faith, hope and love abide. The test of the permanence and assurance of life is in the attitude of our hearts to this great reality of life. Are we in sympathetic rela-

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tions with it? Are we meeting its experiences with courage, with patience and with hope? Does our love illumine what is dark and doubtful? These are the questions we need most often and most solemnly to ask.

When a man makes the answer in the practical allegiance of his life with these triumphant forces the voices of fear and cynicism, of doubt and hesitation, are drowned out. Not by the knowledge that vanishes away, but by the love that abides through all change and all disaster our deepest spiritual problems are solved, and we learn at last that the final name for life and for the world and for God is LOVE. It is the Christ-word and the Christ-solution.



# The Fountain of Life

## II

### THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

*Psalm xxxvi. 9.*—For with Thee is the fountain of life.  
In Thy light shall we see light.

THE most of us, at one time or another, become aware of the partialness of our views of life, the fractional, rather than the integral, way we have of looking at things, the fragmentary and unrelated character of many of our best judgments and opinions. This partialness is spread over the whole history of man, but does not always proceed from the same causes. We are prepared to find this lack in man's earliest history, when people knew actually so little about the world in which they lived, when there was no written history, no literature of the past, no tabulated knowledge of the passing life, no intercommunication of any sort.

Just because man dwelt apart, each in his little section of the earth, and just because he must produce, in a rough and primitive

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way, nearly everything he had, it was not to be expected that his range would be very wide; that his outlook would stretch very far beyond his tent door and the limited circle within which his flocks found pasturage. "From sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth" gauged man's outlook at one time; "as far as the Roman legions have pierced" was the proud estimate of a later time, and when Columbus sailed the unknown seas, so small was the world that he expected, after not many days' sailing, to come around to the shores of India.

But this limitation of outlook has passed away. Men do not dwell in solitude and separation; they touch elbows, they congregate in cities, they move across the continent and traverse the seas with surpassing swiftness. They have compassed the earth; they know what is in it and under it, and are almost in possession of the object glass which shall bring into view the ships in the canals of Mars. But the very possibility of this greater life has brought on a new partialness and super-

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ficialness, for, in order that all mankind may have the larger life, the enjoyment of more things, it is impossible for the individual members of mankind to do many things with efficiency and to the profit of the whole. So, as the old partialness and limitation grew out of the isolated life and the multiplicity of work, the modern partialness and limitation grow out of the organization of life and the specialization of work.

There is in our modern life a wealth of toil, of knowledge, of research, of accomplishment that would astonish the ancient world; but one feels so often about all this vast and bewildering array of things that it is unrelated and disorganized; that although it is wealth in abundance, it does not find its unity in a commonwealth.

There is a vast amount of what one might call a class or professional consciousness—a tendency to look at things from the standpoint of the special function through which one is serving the world, and a corresponding tendency to magnify that function out of all proportion.

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The different professions and arts develop their special techniques and create their special vocabularies, so that a stranger is debarred from an understanding of what goes on in the world outside his own small sphere. Each of us sees light in the light of his own torch, and in the opinion of each the world is just that part of it which reflects the flickering light which he bears.

The zealous churchman believes that the world will be redeemed when it comes finally to accept his doctrine of the church and its accompaniments. The zealous radical believes that what mankind needs above everything else is emancipation from ignorance and superstitious folly. The man in whom the sense of law and organization is strong thinks the world needs more and better legislation, the wider regulation of the details of life by the state; his neighbor of the opposite temperament thinks we need less law and more liberty; less organization and a stronger assertion of individual rights.

The different kinds of consciousness existing, the different attitudes to life proceed-

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ing from the different spheres of work, suggest the many colored lights which are flashed upon the stage to give variety of effect to its tableaux and scenes. So we get a variety of hue from the clerical consciousness and the legal consciousness, the medical, the journalistic, the pedagogical, the artistic and the literary. Each sees light in his own light and interprets life by the color of the medium through which his light is thrown.

So whether the partial outlook on life comes from doing everything in a narrow environment, as the primitive man did, or from doing one thing in a wide and diversified environment, as the modern man does, it is still the partial outlook, it is still seeing light in our own light.

So I think we shall understand why we have taken this text to-day from the ancient psalm. Let us turn to the words again for a moment. A portion of this psalm is full of poetic and religious feeling. It would be difficult for the thought and feeling of any age to surpass the dignity and reverence of its attitude to the One over all :

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“Thy loving kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens ;  
Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies.

Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God ;

Thy judgments are a great deep.

How precious is thy loving kindness, O God!

And the children of men take refuge under the  
shadow of thy wings.

For with thee is the fountain of life,

In thy light shall we see light.”

Now, all this is cast in the poetic mold, and it is the expression of deep religious feeling, the feeling of reverence, dependence and trust.

But all genuine religious feeling rests upon some basis of fact, of reality. There is some conviction out of which the feeling grows and blossoms. What then is the underlying conviction out of which this fine poetry grows? What is the standpoint of a man who believes that he and his fellow-man are to see light in the light of God?

The answer is certainly obvious enough ; at any rate the conclusion which the beautiful metaphor brings before our own minds is obvious enough, for men can not see light in God's light unless this universe of God's is a great consistent whole, a single

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thing, a garment woven entire throughout, a universe pervaded by one kind of intelligence, controlled by one kind of principle and idea, working toward one great purpose. If it is such a universe as that, if it is subject to such unity of thought and purpose as that, if there is a great idea marching through it, and the light of a clear and intelligent aim flashing upon it, then certainly it is not irrational to believe that men dwelling in that universe, themselves capable of thinking and of forming purposes, can get the clew to this universe in which they live, can come into touch with the thought and purpose running through it, and see light in the light that shines all about them.

This is the bed rock of this poet's thought, as it is also the bed rock of all religion, of all philosophy, and of all science ; for these different pursuits and attitudes to life are ultimately but so many efforts of finding the universal bond which binds this scattered and fragmentary life together, of finding some principle which will give cohesion and consistency to things.

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Let us suppose, then, that any man in search of the interpretation of life, in search of a real adjustment of his own life to the world around him, starts out with this rudimentary and almost amorphous idea, shapeless as the block dug out of the quarry, the idea, namely, that there is just one kind of law and purpose running through this universe; that mind is mind and thought is thought wherever he runs across it; that truth and goodness and right are universal, valid for all times and for all parts of the universe; that he is just as sure of that validity as he is of the presence of certain chemical elements in the sun when their characteristic lines reveal themselves in the spectroscope.

Can anything be more basal or more reassuring than such a conviction as that? for although this great shapeless block which one digs out of the quarry of reality does not resemble any of the graven images of God which the various religions and theologies have formed, it is worth more than many of them. It were better to set up in the temple of our faith just this



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rough block of an idea of God, if we knew it to be hewn out of the quarry of reality, than to bow before the daintiest and most perfect image of the craftsmen who know how to overlay with gold and silver the fabrications of their own far-fetched logic and speculations.

If I know that the deep yellow line of the spectrum means the same thing for that far-away sun that it means for this bit of mineral dug out of the earth, I have linked the universe together with a mighty bond; and if I know that this fragment of truth which I have gained in my own experience has its counterpart in a greater truth running throughout the universe, I have come upon that which may indeed well be "the master light of all our seeing."

Now let us see what it implies. In the first place, is it not the corrective and the denial of all real agnosticism? I say of all real agnosticism, for there are two kinds. The agnosticism which is the counterpart of the flippant dogmatism, of the cheap and tawdry things that pass current for devotion and faith and religion, or the swift and

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merciless denunciation of those who can not repeat the shibboleth, of those who stand in awe and hesitation in the presence of life's sanctities, and who cherish the reverence that dares repeat with Paul,—“We know in part, we prophesy in part,”—the agnosticism which is the answer to cant and to the caricature of all genuine religion, is, to say the very least, the sign of returning sanity and health. It is to no man's dishonor to refuse to chatter like a magpie over the fundamental realities of life, when he hears a voice calling in his ear,—“Remove thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

There is an agnosticism which is in the interest of faith and of all the reverences of life, such as Mr. Gilder voices in the familiar lines :

“Thou God supreme,—I too, I too believe!  
But oh! forgive if this one human word,  
Binding the deep and breathless thought of thee  
And my own conscience with an iron band,  
Stick in my throat. I can not say it, thus,—  
This ‘I believe’ that doth thyself obscure ;

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This rod to smite ; this barrier ; this blot  
On thy most unimaginable face  
And soul of majesty."

But agnosticism of the real and radical sort is a different thing. A real agnosticism puts the force of permanent and universal truth into the casual words of the old prophet and takes its stand upon this platform,—“ My thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways, saith the Lord.” A real agnosticism believes that clouds and darkness are round about the Infinite Being, not as a transient but as a permanent condition of his existence. It holds that our ignorance of the great verities is not merely the ignorance of a limited experience, but the result of an incapacity to know ; of the lack of any certainty that the laws of our present experience are also the laws of life lying beyond our present experience. Therefore we can not unify these present experiences of ours ; we can not give them universal validity. We can work along on the hypothesis that two and two are four, but we have no assurance that somewhere

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there are not beings to whom two and two are five.

When the dark line crosses the spectrum revealing in element after element the material identity of the members of the solar system, we exclaim almost spontaneously: "The things that are not seen are present, they are the eternal things;" but if agnosticism is the final truth, then there is no spectrum line flashing upon us the assurance of a fundamental identity between mind and mind, the assurance that truth is truth, and love is love, wherever in the vast spaces of the universe they find expression.

Now, I do not know that there is any demonstration of these things; I do not anticipate the time when it will be possible to prove the existence of God, as one proves that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. For almost unconsciously there lurks somewhere in the process of proof the very thing we set out to prove. Even if we proclaim with syllogistic assurance that the Infinite Being, "will not put us to permanent intellectual confusion," we somehow assume that this

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Infinite Being has the character which our great conclusion claims for him. It is almost impossible to avoid reasoning in a circle when one is reasoning upon any of the ultimate things.

But after all may it not be for the very reason that these ultimate things are so simple in their character ; that the difficulties we raise over them are manufactured difficulties ; that when we try to prove we can after all do hardly more than assert, just as when we try to explain the light we can only declare it to be that by means of which we see ?

And of all the fundamental simplicities none perhaps is either so fundamental or so simple as this conviction that the universe is one, that God's ways are after all our ways and ours are his, that there is an unbroken identity connecting earth with heaven, the seen with the unseen, the daily round and the familiar experience with their eternal pattern. We may almost begin where *In Memoriam* concludes in the conviction that there is one God—

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“That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves.”

2. And now let us think of one more truth that is implied. If we see light in God's light because of the underlying unity, the identity of divine and human running through all things, then this very unity becomes the means by which we correct our individual estimates of life, the standard by which we judge all our thoughts and aims. Our thoughts and ways may in truth be very far from being the thoughts and ways of God, not because of a necessary disparity between them, nor because we fail to have the means of knowing that they are alike should they chance to be, but they may be different simply because through ignorance or intention we have failed to bring them up to the light and see them in his light.

There was a time when men used to say, with a good deal of vehemence, that if there were a Supreme Being in the universe he must be too much absorbed in the man-

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agement of his infinite domain to have particular and constant interest in the affairs of finite men. That certainly is the conclusion of a very barren philosophy, quite as barren as the religious philosophy which it opposes. Its conception of infiniteness is simply that of largeness ; it assumes that if one is actually great enough to create the worlds and hold them in their marvelous courses, individual men must dwindle into insignificance in his thought ; if God sits on the circles of the earth men must be as grasshoppers in his sight. With that idea of infinity the shepherd looks into the starry skies and he shrivels up to nothing and cries out, " What is man that thou art mindful of him? "

If this assumption is right, the conclusion also is right ; if this idea of infiniteness is the true idea, it would seem well-nigh absurd to imagine the Infinite Being as interested in the details of our individual or our collective life. When we look up into the starry skies and realize, as the ancient shepherd did not realize, that all we see is but an infinitesimal portion of the whole

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universe,—does it not for the moment seem absurd to imagine God watching the flight of the sparrow, or giving us in any real sense our daily bread? Does it not seem preposterous to talk about a divine destiny for the nation or to imagine the Infinite Being giving even a passing thought to all the things which have kept this republic on the rack during its history? Men have lived and died; nations have sprung up, have flourished for a season and have passed away, even as the forest trees grow and flourish and rot again to fertilize the soil. What cares God who sits on the circles of the earth and drives these countless fiery steeds dashing eternally through space?

This is the voice of the old barren philosophy to whom infinity is merely another name for bigness. But suppose infinity is instead another name for self-realization, for the fulfillment and revelation of the divine Self in all the onfaring of the finite life of man and of the world! Suppose God, instead of being a passive spectator, a passionless and uninterested observer from



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the remote boundaries of the universe, is the very heart and passion and moving force of all this eager life as it develops and moves on! Suppose that this political unrest and strife is, in the deeper meaning of it, the presence of God himself, disclosing his thought and purpose in the very movement and vitality of human affairs! Does it not give a new sense of the divine presence as well as a new sanctity to these forms of life through which that presence manifests itself?

There were some of the old Hebrew prophets who, in a somewhat rude and anthropomorphic way, got this idea of God as a man of war, fighting their battles with them, interested in the life of the commonwealth, and when we have stripped away the anthropomorphic symbolism and have given it the deeper spiritual setting, we have a vastly profounder and more rational idea of God than when we think of him as the vast, passive, absent-minded Artificer, sitting on the remote borders of the boundless universe.

It gives a new thrill of emotion, a new

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touch of sincerity to our words when we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for the peace of America, for the integrity and honor of the land we love; it makes the words of Sidney Lanier seem more real and pertinent:

“ Long as thy God is God above,  
Thy brother every man below,  
So long, dear Land of all my love,  
Thy name shall shine, thy fame shall glow!”

If infiniteness is, in truth, this sort of intimacy with finiteness, then can we not discover how, in God's light, we surely shall see light; for is not every impulse toward truth and honor, toward purity and justice, toward gentleness and love, toward magnanimity and brotherhood, every effort toward sweeter, saner, loftier life in the individual or the nation, a sign and proof to us that the heart of the Infinite God is beating in all these pulses of our finite life?

And the old words still ring in our ears with their new and profounder meaning:

“ With thee, O God, is the fountain of life  
In thy light shall we see light.”

# An Encounter With God

## III

### AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

*Gen. xxxii. 24.*—And Jacob was left alone ; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

IT seems incongruous and grotesque to portray a man wrestling bodily with God ; in the light of our present knowledge and feeling with regard to such relations it may seem shocking to the moral sense. But we must remember in what conditions and in what stage of development these stories have their origin ; and we must not forget that they have their parallel in the history of nearly every people, in the record of nearly every religion. The Greeks were in a perpetual encounter with their divinities. The Hindoos regarded it a part of the duty of their kings and heroes to “ take the field with club and bow against the supernatural powers of evil.” In the Scandinavian legends the god Thor is constantly challenged to fight by the giants of the people. The great

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story of Prometheus is perhaps the profoundest of all those myths which portray man working out his destiny in combat with the forces that to his consciousness are organized as the supreme forces in the universe.

Longfellow has given a version of a similar thought in the Indian lore, where Shingebis, the diver, comes out to wrestle naked upon the ice with the fierce Northwind, Kabibonokka, and Kabibonokka wrestles all night with the bold diver until the breaking of the day.

“Till his panting breath grew fainter,  
Till his frozen grasp grew feebler,  
Till he reeled and staggered backward  
And retreated, baffled, beaten,  
To the kingdom of Wabasso,  
Hearing still the gusty laughter,  
Hearing Shingebis, the diver,  
Singing: “O Kabibonokka,  
You are but my fellow mortal.”

Man first came to the consciousness of his life in the midst of struggle with the elemental forces of nature. He found himself contending with the fierce heat of the

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sun, with the frost and ice of winter, with the blast of the north wind, with the earthquake and the tempest, with the resistance of the soil and the Siren-like allurements of the sea. These forms and forces of nature were personified and worshiped. Man realized his dependence upon these mighty forces ; he was conscious of dread and fear, and yet his spirit rose up in resistance and he came to feel that his destiny was a destiny of perpetual conflict with those divinities of earth and sea and air which he could neither befriend nor cajole.

I doubt if we can fully understand this story of Jacob wrestling with the angel until we view it in the light of the class of stories with which it belongs. It has its parallel in such myths and legends as these to which I have referred, and yet already it begins to difference itself from them in accordance with the controlling genius, the sublime mission of the Hebrew faith. Already in this story of Jacob, and perhaps almost without intention of the one who first gave it form, there begins to take shape the fact, than which there is none pro-

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founder or more radical in human life. Here is a man wrestling with God through the long night up to the breaking of the day. It is a personal encounter. He is triumphant but he comes off bearing the marks and the bruises of his conflict, and it ends in a transformation of character which was always represented in the Hebrew thought by the change of name—"No longer shalt thou be called Jacob, but Israel, for thou hast striven with God and hast prevailed."

The element which the story has in common with similar stories and legends is the necessity for human struggle, the eternal need laid upon man to go into conflict with the elemental forces of the world and conquer them; but the step in advance in this legend is found in the hint and prophecy, shadowy though it be, of the ethical element in the struggle. Many of the legends which portray man's struggle with nature and with the forces of nature, which he has deified, are designed to show the superiority of man. He is the great being of the universe. He comes off victorious,

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and his victory is tinged with contempt ; or if he is not victorious, but is still doomed to suffer, like Prometheus, he bears a brave heart, suffers like a hero, and still feels in his soul a contempt for the deity who has only power to show for his chief attribute.

But we can not fail to detect another truth emerging from this Jacob legend. Man is still in conflict ; he wrestles with God ; but it is not a conflict for the sake of conquest and extermination ; it is not marked by contempt ; it is forced on by the resistless, eager question which Jacob voiced when he said, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name." It is a struggle to get at the meaning of divinity, to penetrate the secret mystery of life, to unlock the doors to its hidden, inner experiences ; and the conflict issues in victory, yet not a victory in which man stands flushed and triumphant over his fallen foe, but triumphant because through his struggle the might of the One with whom he fought has entered into him, though he come out of the conflict sore and bruised, bearing about in his body the marks of the dire encounter.

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So in this far-off story, set in the shadowy background of almost prehistoric conditions, we get glimpses of a law of the moral and spiritual achievements of man, a law which finds clearer expressions, higher manifestations as time goes on, but which is still truly prefigured in this long night-wrestle of a man with God in which the might of the immortal passed into the mortal man. And this law of spiritual achievement, of spiritual revelation, I ask you to trace with me now a little further. We shall understand it better, perhaps, if we analyze it a little and think about one element in it at a time.

First, there is the fact of the human struggle ; man has to wrestle for all he gets. He must fight with nature in some form for his daily bread. He must contend with the life and law within nature for the bread that satisfieth his soul. In all the thought and questioning of man from the beginning regarding the meaning and possibility of revelation, there seems to be nothing more significant than the fact, dawning with some measure of clearness



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upon our time, that revelation is not a name for something apart from man and independent of him ; it is relative to man, dependent upon him. There is a predestined coöperation without which the knowledge of truth and the experience of life are impossible.

Man's discovery of truth is the counterpart of God's revealing of it ; the counterpart, I say, not the substitute for it. Yet, without this ceaseless activity and struggle of man how silent, how unresponsive, how meaningless the universe would be ! It might be likened to the warp in the loom ; it is there in long continuous threads. There is no fabric, no pattern, no solidity, no meaning. But the shuttle flies back and forth ; by incessant and repeated effort the threads enter the embrace of the threads upon the loom ; color, pattern, solidity, fabric result. Can you say that the beautiful product belongs to the warp and not to the woof ? Can you say that it belongs to the woof and not to the warp ? It is the coöperation, the embrace,

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the firm union of the two which gives the finished result.

So on this vast loom of the universe are arranged the endless threads of destiny, of truth, of experience, of life. There they are devoid of meaning, of achievement, until the life of man in its endless movement flies back and forth, and through the seeming antagonism, through the very oppositeness of nature and direction, the unity of result is achieved. It in no wise detracts from the greatness, the wisdom, the absoluteness of God to find this coöperative necessity; to learn that revelation has man's discovery as its counterpart.

But, after all, that is not the primary question; the primary question is,—what is the fact? We must get our thought of the character of God from the nature of the facts we find. And we certainly know that this universe has ever been silent and speechless to man until he has himself given it an articulate voice; he has been the interpreter of the silence; the mute finger-speech of God, some man has read over

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into vocal syllables for the instruction of his fellow-men.

There is no thoughtful mind, no reverent heart, for whom this fact will for one moment banish the eternal reality of God. Can you not pray to-day and forever that God will give you your daily bread, although you are aware that God never directly taught any man to bake bread, never taught him even how to sow wheat, how to grind it into flour? All this belongs to the infinite struggle, the ceaseless task.

Can not your heart still respond to the old beautiful faith, "He healeth all our diseases"—although you have to remember, out of the very fullness of that faith, how step by step the knowledge of all healing processes and the staying of the ravages of disease and pestilence have been wrought by the wisdom, the skill, the profound pity and love of man for his fellow-man? Can you not plant yourself firmly upon the irrevocable conviction that God is light, and that in him is no darkness at all, notwithstanding your added knowledge that all human lore and wisdom concerning the stars above us

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and the earth beneath us and the countless life that inhabits earth and sea, have been gathered, preserved, perpetuated by man himself? I can not conceive of these two things seeming contradictory except to the most superficial, the most indolent or the most irreverent soul. It is the coöperative law that is written all over life and that has found its working and its fulfillment ever since there was a man to see and consider.

The universe is a storehouse of potentialities; it is a great silent battery until man comes, touches the key and flashes the silent energy in forms of intelligence to a million souls.

The first fact then is the fact of struggle; the fact of co-operative activity, of wrestling with God in order that God may be revealed and understood.

The next thought I want you to reflect upon is that it is man, it is your fellow-beings, who have achieved, and are still achieving, the destiny of life through some form of struggle. It is the human, personal quality in all this infinite toil and task that I want you to think of.

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There is a certain kind of struggle, of titanic effort, in the evolution of the universe itself, in what Paul called the groaning of creation waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. There is the sign of struggle in all this convulsive movement of nature from chaos to order, in all the throbs and age-long travailing before man appeared; but after all the creation truly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. Creation, in the larger sense, begins with the advent of man, and the struggle that is significant, that is interpretative, that is revealing, is this long pathetic human struggle which has wrought out the spiritual achievements of mankind.

Now it is just this human, personal element in the whole process that is so precious, and that makes so powerful appeal to our sympathy and interest. We are not in a universe that is whirling along like some gigantic brainless engine upon the rails. The revelation of the personal heart of the universe is not interpreted in terms of the steam-gauge and the cyclometer. Personality is the key to life; the heart of man

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answereth to the heart of God. The strength of the Almighty comes down into the soul of the man who wrestles with him, though he bear the marks of the encounter.

Perhaps we are sometimes in danger of losing sight of this personal element in the universal struggle. We are accustomed to talk in impersonal terms about the evolution of the universe, about the progress of thought and ideas. We get accustomed to the abstract view of it all, and thus we lose contact with the human significance of it; forget how it has all been achieved through "the effort, the sorrow, the victory of humanity."

What really do we mean when we talk about the progress of science? There is no motor by the name of science that speeds along the pathway of life ringing its bell and blowing its whistle and running over heedless men like some mighty juggernaut. But there are and there have been in almost every age lonely souls who above all things have loved the truth, have been devoted to it with undying fidelity, and have listened

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to the mute finger-speech of God through all the spaces of the world.

There is no science that reveals truth, but there are men of science, men who have loved the fact and the reality. There are men like Copernicus and Galileo, like Newton and Darwin, who have wrestled through the long night until the breaking of the day while their fellow-mortals, slumbering late, waking at last with heavy eyes, will not believe that they have wrestled with God and prevailed. They can not as yet see the new name written in their foreheads, the sign that through their fidelity they have prevailed and achieved.

We have to put all these results of human thinking and suffering into algebraic formulas for convenient use, but we need often to return from the formula to the throbbing life of which it is but the sign. We need to feel how great have been the pain, and the cost, and the sore struggle of these our fellow-men who have lived before us. We need to realize how we are blessed by their pain, and how through their poverty we are made rich. It is this thought that binds

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our humanity together and makes us realize that there is something sacramental, something redeeming in this pathetic struggle, in this generous and forgetting sacrifice.

Therefore we must not lose sight of the element of intense personalism in all the struggle and achievement of the ages ; we must not dissociate the ideas and the truths from the heroic souls through whose pain and sorrow we possess them.

And when we have thought to the very bottom of all the reasons, and have made due account of the lingering of superstitions, is not this after all the reason why mankind will not readily let go its faith, its love and devotion for Christ? Is it not because he is the person of persons ; the one whose name is rightly above every name ; because he so gathered up into himself the spiritual struggles and the spiritual achievement of mankind? Is it not because the legendary struggle of Jacob with the angel comes to its highest spiritual reality in the experience of Jesus in Gethsemane? When all the spurious interpretations of



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the truth have passed away, will not men still discover an abiding meaning in the ancient prophecy that by his stripes we are healed and that through his suffering he led many sons to repentance?

The hopeful aspect of the spiritual movement of man is in its return to the concrete personal element in life; to a deeper appreciation of the fact that the greatest thing in life is not a blind impersonal progress of ideas and principles, but the earnest, devoted effort of brave human souls to see the truth and do the divine deed. It is men who are the saviors of men; it is the sons of men who for each other take upon themselves the sorrows and the sins of the world, who at last bear the world out of sin and sorrow into the everlasting light of God's face.

Here then are two facts, the struggle; the human element in the struggle. There is yet a third fact. It is through this struggle that transformation of character comes about. Man wrestles with God and at last he learns, it may be only at the break of

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day, it may be when he is bruised and lame, but at last he learns, not what he asked, the name of God, for he does not get at the ultimate mystery of life; but he learns that his name is changed; he is no longer Jacob; he is Israel, one who has prevailed with God. Spiritual achievement, development and strength of character are born out of all this infinite labor and sorrow.

This is the pitiful, the tragic, but the noble and heroic aspect of our human life. I never look into the beautiful, innocent face of a child without some feeling of dread concern. Is there any of us who can? One wants to ward off all this inevitable combat; and yet who would dare do it? and how soon it comes! The little mind begins to struggle with the problems of character and at school with the problems of knowledge. It is a solitary and personal encounter. To do the problem for the child, to settle the simple question of duty or right, to him so disturbing, without leaving room for the personal encounter, may seem the easy way, to the thoughtless and the sentimental the best

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way, but for the achievement of character always the wrong way. The duty of making oneself useless to child and pupil is ever as urgent as that of making oneself useful to him.

And then the years go by. Life unfolds into many forms of experience. The greater part of human experience is the universal, common experience of the race, and yet it must be wrought out each time anew in each human life. And who can tell another how to live? who can interpret for another this common experience of labor and sorrow, of pain and death? What can any of us do except to look with hope and say to each other—all this conflict, all this mystery of life, all these Gethsemanes and Calvaries shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; they shall purify and ennoble you until you are able to wear the name Israel, the one who has so wrestled with the divine meaning of life and penetrated so much of its secret that the name Prevailer with God is at last the name worthy to be borne!

We seem so dumb and helpless in the

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presence of these common experiences of life which come laden with pain and sorrow ; we seem staggered afresh as one after another of our fellow-mortals comes for his baptism of fire ; yet, after all, is not the meaning hidden here in the law of spiritual achievement of which we have been thinking to-day ? The fire that turns the iron into steel is the key to the iron's destiny ; and if character is the final and worthy goal for man, then the struggle through which character is achieved and the great name is won is the key to human life. "To him that overcometh," runs the apocalyptic promise, "will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."

# The Book That Could Not Be Opened

## IV

### THE BOOK THAT COULD NOT BE OPENED

*Isaiah* xxix. 10-12.—For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets ; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered. And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this I pray thee ; and he saith : I can not ; for it is sealed : and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying : Read this I pray thee ; and he saith, I am not learned.

TWO creative influences are at work in the world, shaping and developing it ; the power of knowledge and the power of will. Life in every form depends ultimately upon two things : the fact and the deed ; the idea and the realization of the idea.

Conversely, there are two forms of weakness in the world, two things which hinder and thwart ; these two are ignorance and indifference. It is useless to ask which of

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the two is better, knowledge or will ; which of the corresponding two is worse, ignorance or indifference. Wherever there is zeal without knowledge, an irresponsible enthusiasm rushing into life without regard to the wisdom of fact and experience, the only result is fanatical confusion. Wherever there is knowledge, the acquisition of facts and ideas without the transformation of them into life, the result is pedantry, diletantism, scholastic pride. The point of deepest depression and degradation is manifestly reached where ignorance and indifference are combined ; correspondingly, the progress and development of all true and noble life are dependent ultimately upon the progress and development of both knowledge and will.

This is, perhaps, a rendering in modern terms of the thought which was in the mind of the prophet Isaiah when he spoke to his contemporaries the words which I have read. Isaiah was one of the few men of his time who realized that the nation was fast drifting to political ruin. So far as the causes of peril were within the nation itself,

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he tried to point them out and to have the people rectify them. But the current was too swift, too near the precipice and was bound to rush on. The prophet got the customary reward of the prophet from those who were too blind to see the danger and from those who were contented, well-to-do, indolent and easy-going. They wagged their heads in derision and mockingly said: "Who is this that teaches us line upon line, precept upon precept, as if we were children?"

Then the prophet's answer was flung back in a spirit of denunciation and of bitter disappointment, as the tremendous incubus of the ignorance and indifference of his contemporaries weighed upon him. "God hath poured out upon you the spirit of a deep sleep, and He hath shut your eyes the prophets, and He hath covered your heads the seers, and the vision of life which they see and tell is like a sealed book to you. Some of you can not interpret it because you can not read, and some of you can not interpret it because the book is sealed and you have not interest and incli-

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nation enough to break the seals. You say I can not read it, for I am not learned ; I can not read it, for it is sealed."

Now, there is a remarkable modernness about all this. There is a modernness about it because there is a universality about it. What Isaiah said of his own time, a man like him in spirit would say of every time. For we must remember that a prophet of the first rank is never a cynic nor a satirist of his time. He is a seer, an idealist, and he measures the duty and opportunity of every age by a standard which exists in his own mind and conscience. He is the architect who insists that these earthly houses made with hands shall be modeled after the house not made with hands, shaped after the pattern shown him in the mount.

So, I say, any man looking out on life and society with the eyes of Isaiah would feel as he did. He would feel that however much mankind had progressed it was still recreant to existing opportunities and possible advances ; that it was still and constantly guilty of "the sin of the ungirt loin and the unlit lamp." And as he looked out



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on life and saw men struggling with their opportunities and their destinies ; saw them trying to open the great book of life, or indolently leaving it unopened and unread, he would feel again how fit were these words spoken so long ago—"The vision of all is like a book that is sealed ; some can not read it because they are not learned ; some will not read it because they lack the energy to break the seals."

But it needs not the insight of Isaiah to see that the trouble lying deep at the heart of our own time is a trouble of both the intellect and the will ; the lack of knowledge and the lack of inclination, the absence of opportunity and the refusal to heed opportunity.

Sometimes we are inclined to lay the entire blame at the door of one or the other of these conditions. Plato identified evil with ignorance, and he taught that the way to make men better was to make them wiser ; that virtue was a necessary consequence of knowledge. In that masterly dialogue, the Protagoras, Socrates, who is the spokesman, proceeds in his usual relentless dia-

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lectic to show, one after the other, that the virtues are the result of knowledge and the vices of ignorance. If Plato had used the figure of Isaiah, and been true to the logic of the Socratic doctrine, he must have said that the only reason why men could not read the book of life was because they were not learned; because somewhere they had missed the knowledge of that fact or truth which would have opened the door to its corresponding virtue.

This has been one method of interpreting the recreancy of human life to its highest opportunities. The other way, the way more familiar to those who have been brought up under the influence of the Christian church, is to charge the whole matter to the perverted and sinful heart of man, to his will estranged from the divine will; consequently the conviction which has been more deeply ingrained than almost any other is that the heart and the will of man must be changed; that the essential attitude of his own inner nature must be reversed before the forces of good can be set at work. The whole trouble is that man stands before

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the book of life and can not read it aright because he can not open it ; and he can not open it because it is irrevocably sealed to his impotent and indolent will.

But as we look out widely upon the field of life, as we begin to see the magnitude and the meaning of this great book of life, it becomes more and more apparent that neither the teaching of Plato nor that of the Church has been wholly right, and for the reason that each has taught but half the truth ; and the half which each taught has needed the other half to correct and complete it.

If any earnest person takes a look out upon the field of human society as it is organized to-day, begins to think about that fraction of it which is around him, in which he lives ; especially the parts of it which seem most in need of improvement and of help, to what conclusion is he likely to arrive ? Will he say that the reason for the disorder, disease and crime that he sees around him is found in the inherent evil of human nature ; that men love evil rather than goodness and darkness rather than

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the light? Will he look for the explanation of poverty-stricken homes and the besotted condition of their inmates in some inherent impulse toward vice? Will he declare that the only reason why men are not happy and prosperous and contented is because they want to be bad?

And will he conclude from all this that it is utterly useless to try to change the outward conditions of men until you have changed their hearts; that not environment but the soul and the conscience is the place of attack?

This is precisely what men have said a thousand times and what a great many who are certainly earnest and zealous enough believe still with all their hearts. But when any one follows out this path of conviction he does not travel very far before he is confronted by certain evident facts. He finds in the first place that, with regard to countless ills, when ignorance is displaced by knowledge, the evil disappears. We turn back to the Bible and we find there the belief shared generally by the people that disease was a direct evidence

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of sin and a direct punishment for it. "What hath this man done that he was born blind?"—said the people on one occasion.

Disease is often enough the result of some broken law of life, but we are daily learning how much of law is broken through ignorance. The mere access of light, the spread of knowledge, the discovery of disease-producing conditions hidden away out of the sight of man, result in the banishment, or imprisonment, forever of one form of disease after another. Day by day the territory presided over by disease is becoming annexed to the dominion of the queen of health. The men of science are exploring in this great field of life. Diseases which but a few years ago were almost beyond the control of the physicians are now so much within their mastery that they laugh them to scorn as they watch their puny struggles within hands which have become mighty through the advent of knowledge.

There is no reason why we should not ultimately hope for the entire control and banishment of disease, and for the elevation

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of the doctors to the guardianship of the prophylactics of life instead of its pathology.

So here is one domain of life, where evil is the result of ignorance more than of a bad heart. There is no longer any use in saying that the bacteria with which every drop of water swarms, and the germs which are borne to a whole continent from Russian steppes or the far away Indies, are the result of human sin, of the depraved heart of man. To take that attitude merely serves to bring confusion into all our moral reckonings. It would be as sane to take stand with the old astrologists and charge it all to the malign influence of the planets. It is simply one of the aspects of life where men have stood helplessly before the book of life and have been unable to read it because they have not been learned. The lack has been a lack of knowledge rather than a lack of will.

Now, as we follow along this path, we meet another fact which calls a halt. We have been accustomed to hear men say that

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bad outward conditions are the direct result of bad inward states. We have been told repeatedly that drunkenness and kindred vices are the greatest causes of poverty in the world. That is certainly a truth, but it is a truth which lies so near the path of our travel that the wayfaring man, though a fool, can not help seeing it. But the truth that is not quite so evident and does not lie so near the surface, nor get so frequent iteration, is that poverty is also a cause of drunkenness and all the other social vices; that bad social surroundings have as decided an influence in making men bad, as bad men have in making their surroundings bad. The whole question of social environment is demanding our attention anew.

A human character is a very complex thing. There are at least three forces at work within each of us at any time. There is, first, our inherited self, that which we are in body and spirit as a product of the race life out of which we emerge. Then there is the environment, that marvelous field of influences and institutions into

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which we come, upon which as a stage we enact our parts. The forms of government, religion, social life, in which we live; laws, customs, habits and prejudices; geographical and climatic conditions; differences of city and country life,—these and a thousand other things constitute the second of the three forces. Then last of all there is the will of each individual reacting upon these other forces and recombining them into that result which makes up the character of the individual.

Now, the force of inheritance, so far as it is a past thing, so far as it lies behind us, does not come within our present consideration. But the environment, that complex of influences which constitutes our social surrounding, is distinctly that thing which is determined largely by the intelligence or the ignorance of mankind. If a man's drunkenness causes his poverty we must change the man; but if his poverty causes his habit of drunkenness, and if that poverty inheres in any degree in a maladjustment of social conditions, if there is an incubus upon a man outside of his own will,



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*that* belongs unmistakably within the sphere of things which a right reason will find a way to alter, just as already advancing knowledge has banished so many forms of disease.

And this is just the truth which is dawning upon many thoughtful people at last; the book of life is to many a closed book, not because men are bad nor because their wills are at fault, but because under existing conditions they can not read; they are not learned. The fault is not in that indifference of will which alone the will can change, but in the external state which light, wisdom and experience have changed a thousand times and will change again.

Therefore, the great necessity laid upon us all is to sit down with teachable spirits and learn. The time for experiments, for tinkering and quackery, has gone by. We need the light of that wisdom which the history of human and social development can give us before we can know what are the wise steps to take. We must learn to read before we can open the book and understand what is written.

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One could speak at almost any length of the applications of this thought. Let us note briefly one or two, that the meaning may be clearer.

There is the ever-recurring question,—“How shall we deal with the problem of intemperance? What are we going to do with the saloon?” Now, nobody can tell us just what we are going to do or just what it is best to do. But the thing to note, as an illustration of the present thought, is this: that whenever we try to deal with a great problem like this, regardless of the social forces underlying its development, we deal with it from the standpoint of the empiric and not from the standpoint of knowledge. For whoever ignores that palpable condition in human society, that habit which has become ingrained in the fiber of our Anglo-Saxon race through centuries of growth, the habit which has been fitly called the “tavern instinct,” is working just as aimlessly as did the heroes before Hercules’ time who tried to exterminate the hydra. The tavern and its successor, the saloon, is to many men

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the focus of their social life. It is a bad social center, let us admit, and most of all because it ignores the home and deprives man of the society of woman and of children. But right or wrong, it is a fact, it is a social condition, and one which can be permanently changed only by that wisdom which comes from knowledge of the circumstances which make the institution what it is.

Therefore it is full time to say to the empirics and to all, however zealous and earnest, if the zeal is not guided by knowledge: "hands off, for a little, until we can really learn how to read this puzzling chapter in our book of life."

There is another order of relations which affords a striking illustration of our thought. When one looks out upon the social struggle that is everywhere going on, and watches the ceaseless effort of the masses of the people to better their condition, he discovers on one side a class that is bitter in its antagonism to every existing institution, whatever it is; a class whose watchword is destruction. "Tear down that we

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may build anew," is the battle cry. And over against these are others who ridicule every effort of men to emancipate themselves and to bring about any change. There are men who regard the economic rules under which industry is now conducted as essentially permanent and eternal and who regard any effort to revise them as flying in the face of nature.

Now the appeal needs to be made from both these classes to a more intelligent reading of the book of life. Let us find the truth, and the truth will have power to make us free. Let us from a profounder knowledge of history learn how mankind has developed in the past, in what way it has transcended imperfect conditions, has found place for larger ideals, more humane relations, and out of that knowledge let us walk on confidently into the future.

But we must now leave this side of the subject and look for a moment at the other. For life consists of two things,—the fact and the deed; the idea and the realization of the idea.

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For those who can not interpret the book of life because they can not read, knowledge is the necessity, knowledge growing "from more to more." But for those who stand helplessly and indifferently by and say,—“I can not read it, for it is sealed,”—the appeal is to the will, to the capacity for action.

The fact must lead to the deed; but in its turn, also, the doing of the deed is what brings with it the revelation of the fact and the truth. Therefore, knowledge and action are, by right and by divine intention, inseparable companions.

When we try to understand the motives and forces that guide the people among whom we live, we perceive at length two reasons for the indifference and inactivity of men. The very greatness of the power for knowledge, sometimes dwarfs and paralyzes the power of action. Men become absorbed in speculation and satisfied with the curiosity of learning. “They think and wonder, and muse and reflect, but lose the faculty of achieving in the characterless maze of mere thought and

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perception." It is precisely that attitude which the keen eye of Shakespeare saw :

"The native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action."

It is an easy thing to beguile and deceive ourselves ; to imagine that we have achieved the virtuous and courageous deed because we have cherished the virtuous thought ; it is easy to be valiant in our dreams ; we slay our thousands and our tens of thousands when we muse before the fire ; it is not difficult to have the emotions and impulses of honorable action as we listen to its presentation in poem, or drama, or sermon. But the true test is to come on the morrow when we are deprived of the sustaining emotion of the moment and have to fall back on the conviction which lies deep in the heart ; shall we be brave and honorable, and devoted and self-sacrificing then ? or will the clasps of the book seem so heavy that we turn away with the sad reflection

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that we can not open the book because it is sealed ?

This is the most seductive cause of indifference and inactivity : the substitution of virtue of thought for virtue of deed ; the exchange of ruddy resolution for the pale cast of thought.

But deeper than all this, and sadder than all, is the indifference which grows out of the general aimlessness of life ; the refusal on our part to commit it to the best and the noblest that we know ; it is the sin " of the ungirt loin and the unlit lamp." Knowledge and the light of truth we need and shall forever need. In some ways we need it before the path to action can become clear. But the most of us have already knowledge that outruns our action. We have annexed to our dominions vast territories of truth in which we have not cut a single path or planted a single seed.

Knowledge and truth are the elements by means of which life progresses, but it is the will of man consecrated to truth which realizes truth and builds it into houses more and more like the house not made with

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hands. Truth is like the hundred-eyed Argus of the Greek mythology ; but Argus is helpless, unless the hundred-handed Briareus lends him aid, just as poor blind Briareus is helpless unless the seeing Argus leads him on. You must have the truth if you are to be free. But you must will to do the truth and be led by it, if its hand shall ever clasp yours and lead you on "o'er crag and torrent till the night is gone."

The last word to-day then is simply this,—Consecrate yourself to all the truth that is clear to your eyes to-day. If you know anything or possess anything of value, find some way to dedicate it to the general good. Have you riches? You are only their steward ; they are yours for the purpose of making the general life more beautiful and rich, for in the last resort all private riches come out of the pain and toil of the general life. Have you knowledge? You are only the channel of it ; let it flow on ; do not dare to dam up the waters.

The only reason why we can discover and possess any truth is because the divine life which pervades all things is flashing it



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forth in countless ways; the only reason why we can do any deed is because the eternal will is constantly energizing and acting. And the chief reason why the gleams of eternal light have not earlier flashed out into full day and the energizings of the eternal will transformed life everywhere is because we also have wills and have power to hinder and to thwart. Our wills are ours, but it takes so long to learn that they are ours to make them His.

I leave with you then these three inquiries:

Do we believe that our humanity has in it the capacity for improvement, for nobler and better life?

Have we as individuals, or have we in our collective life as churches, any gift, any power, any opportunity to help forward faster and more efficiently than now the growth and progress of human life?

Finally, shall we will to do it?

To the man, the church, the community that can say "Yes" to these questions, the book of life can not long remain bound and fastened with perplexing seals.

## Unregarded Prophets

### V

#### UNREGARDED PROPHETS

*Mark vi. 4.*—And Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

WITH this proverb Jesus rebuked the skepticism of the village folk, the neighbors whom he had known all his life. It is a very natural scene in that little village synagogue at Nazareth; it is characteristically true to human nature. This young man, who had grown up among them, who, with his brothers and sisters, had played in the village street as a child, whom they had known as the son of Mary and Joseph the carpenter, and afterward as a carpenter himself, had come to that point in his life where he felt the throbbing of a great and holy purpose in his heart; he had consecrated himself with full vigor to the new resolve formed there in the wilderness where his kinsman John was heralding the

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kingdom of God. He came up from the consecrating vow, as many another has come, with a new light upon his face, as if the heavens had opened and God had audibly uttered an approving word. Then from this moment of highest beatitude he had been hurried away into the desert to struggle with the meaning of this new resolve, to conquer the temptation of power, to subdue himself to his mission; and then one day finds him back again in the familiar town among the hills where he had always lived, whose every cottage and lane and tree were familiar to him, and on one day in the synagogue, at that point in the service where it was not unusual for others than the appointed officers to speak, this young man opens his lips and the people bore him witness that he spoke with grace and power. A new radiance was on his face, a new convincingness was in his words; it all seemed to them for one unguarded moment as if all this were in truth a message straight from the heart of God.

Then it was that this characteristic working of human nature made itself felt. "What

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means it all?" they asked with questioning faces. "Is he not our own fellow-villager? Is he not Mary and Joseph's son? Is he not the young carpenter, the one who but a few weeks ago thatched my roof and made the new mast, Simon, for your fishing boat? And here are his sisters and brothers, these ordinary common folk; it must be we are mistaken; our ears are deceived; he has not said what we have seemed to hear falling from his lips."

Then Jesus met their bewilderment with a proverb: "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house." The proverb simply formulates the law and habit of our natures to depreciate that which we seem to know. That which is common tends to become commonplace; the familiar scenes and objects breed in us indifference if not contempt.

To begin with the less important, we may recognize this fact, or at any rate the exact analogue of it, in our relation with the natural world. Somehow the senses get blunted to the beauty of the objects which

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we see around us every day ; we lose the power to wonder and appreciate. Were there but one daisy in the field we would give a handsome sum to go and see it ; we would look with the scrutiny of admiring interest, and would fix its form in our hearts. But because the fields are full of daisies and clover, and the waysides affluent with floral forms, we forget that they are beautiful ; we discount their value at once under the contemptuous name of weed, and when perchance some one arises who has power “ to read the secret of the weed’s plain heart ” we are too often like the village folk of Nazareth ; we can not believe just for the reason that we have known this common flower all our lives. “ Is it not a weed ? ” we say in precisely the same tone of voice, with the same accent of bewildered incredulity with which those people asked one another, “ Is not this the carpenter ? ”

Thus it is that the common becomes the commonplace ; we fail

“ To take it at God’s value, and pass by  
The offered wealth with unrewarded eye.”

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Happy are we if, before it is too late, we come under the influence of the poets and the lovers of nature whose observant eyes and responsive hearts bring us back to see the glory that was passing before our very door; happy are we if these dear silent prophets of God's faithfulness and love do not remain forever to us as prophets without honor in their own country and among their own people. Most blessed of all are we if sometime we learn that

"The meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

But, again, we find this law and habit of human nature working itself out in the tendency to depreciate the present as compared with the past or the future.

There are some who always put the Golden Age in the remote past; there are many more who put it safely forward into the remote future; but it requires more hope, more faith, more devotion to put it here in the present, to find its material in the molten ideas and passions and possibilities of our own contemporary life. Jesus

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said,—Say not of the Kingdom of God, “Lo here!” as if one might find it in the past, or “Lo there!” as if one must look for it in the future, but say rather “the Kingdom of God is among you;” and Carlyle in his own rugged way echoed that doctrine of Jesus, when he said:—“Here or nowhere is thy ideal; work it out therefrom.”

Now from the great events, the heroic characters, the decisive moments, the critical turning points in the past history of mankind, we are perpetually to derive inspiration and courage. The battle of Thermopylæ will forever stand as witness, not only of indomitable courage and devotion, but of a decisive event in the shaping of human history; we can not too often tell the story of such events to our children. We can not keep too fragrant the memory of those who have served their day and their fellow-men; the shining roll should be ever visible to our eyes and its names significant to our hearts, but we should never turn to them without the warning that over and over again “the worshipers of light

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ancestral have made present light a crime.” If the past is sacred because it is the past, if it commands our reverence only because we can see no glory in human deeds until the halo of time has crowned them, then do we need the warning.

What is it in our natures that enables us to admit with an almost credulous unhesitancy the hand of God shaping such events as the discovery of America, the religious revolution under Luther, the sailing of the Mayflower, but keeps us blind to the providential shaping of events which are issuing out of our own time and life?

I remember how deeply I used to be impressed with the once familiar argument for the divine origin of Christianity, that it came into a world which was providentially prepared for it. Hebrew in its origin, it came into touch with the Roman empire when that empire was at the fullness of its glory and could give the new religion an extensive spread, such as it could not have had at any other moment ; and its scriptures laid hold upon the Greek language and



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made themselves eternal in that eloquent medium of the human spirit.

I still believe there is great force in this argument, but it is often made more than false through the limitation of it, through the implication of a special and temporary preparation of the world for the march of divine ideas ; and so in order to make some one object in life sacred and worth revering, we doom the rest to a more hopeless confusion than ever.

We should not forget that time corrects the aberrations of judgment ; that it sifts out the little things from the great event and the noble person, enables us to see their relative value just as in the distance we appreciate and measure more justly the relation of the great mountains to the little hills. It is not always possible for even the wisest to see so clearly the meaning of the current life that they are able to tell us what the Eternal Wisdom is saying to us at this moment.

But we may at least be aware that one purpose runs through all time and all life ; that sacredness is not an attribute of the past and

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secularity of the present. It is possible for us all to live with a deeper sense of the significance to ultimate history of the events over which we ourselves have some shaping influence ; of the life which gets impulse and momentum from the wills and desires embodied in ourselves. This much we may know, and this surely is enough to lift every moment of life out of the commonplace and the trivial, and to help us realize with some solemnity that when the jargon of voices is stilled and the hurried estimates of current events are all in, there is One who will pass judgment upon it all—who, with his winnowing fan, will sift out the chaff from the wheat.

When even for once one has felt the significance of history, I can not imagine him believing that God cares nothing for the movement of life contemporaneous with ourselves, nor can I imagine him determining his own relation to these events without some regard to the ultimate verdict upon them by that One who “standeth behind the shadow keeping watch above his own.”

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We come then to the final thought, ■ thought which comes more nearly within the sphere of our lives in their interior and most personal relations, for it dawns upon us sometimes with consternation that we fail to perceive the greatness and the sacredness of the life that is stirring within these near and familiar relations, within the circle of these interests that hold us together.

What are the qualities which we revere in those who lived long enough ago to have won our reverence? Are they not bravery, fortitude and courage? Are they not tenderness, patience and devotion? Are they not self-forgetting sacrifice and love? What are the attributes that we connect with God? Are they not these same qualities refined and intensified and raised to the infinite degree?

We can not forget that the stuff of which our human life is made is a mixing of two apparently incongruous elements. The essential truth still abides in the old creation story, that God made man of the clay of the earth and breathed into him his spirit

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so that he became a living soul, and man has fought out his destiny and developed his life-story through the warfare of the twofold components of his nature, the clay in him fighting the God in him, the God in him anon asserting the ascendancy over the clay in him. The story of the strifes and passions, the long catalogue of sins, the lusts and cruel hates, the murders and brutal wars, the hand of man lifted up against his brother—with all this we are only too familiar, and we stand aghast as we see the clay element asserting itself in us; the law within our members, as Paul put it, that when we would do good evil is present with us, so that the thing we would do we do not, and the thing we would not do that we do. We feel our hearts sink within us as we see the fierce old passions forcing their resistless way down the channels of inheritance and asserting their supremacy almost in the cradle.

But there is the compensating side, and to this side we never turn often enough. If the clay is still fighting the God in us, the God is still asserting itself over the clay.

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I know not where we are to look for the presence of divinity in such convincing degree as in the very human hearts which throb to-day with intense and eager life. Where are we to look for the exhibition of the traits that have upon them the stamp of God's very nature, if not in these lives to whom we are bound by the daily companionships of life? Are the channels of pity, of sympathy, of tender fellowship for each other's sorrows and sufferings dried up? Do these streams that come from the presence of God languish? Can we ask that question and not straightway get the answer back, out of our grateful memories or our present experience of the great tides of human pity and love pouring in upon us in the hours of our solicitude and our sore need? Suffering, and pain, and peril,—how they open for us the springs of compassionate human interest, and our hearts instinctively confess,—“God is in this place and I knew it not.”

Nor need we go to history for examples of bravery, of fortitude, of courage. Leonidas and Winkelried, and the Light

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Brigade will ever inspire us and be to us the symbols of a quality which is the possession of our common humanity; but oh! that our eyes might be opened so that we should see these qualities in action in the lives that belong not to history, that have not yet won the peace of the grave, but are in the flesh and moving through all the perplexities of this present life! Does history describe fortitude greater than you have sometimes witnessed in the lives around you; patience that is sweeter or more touching than you have seen in lives about you in your own households or among your friends, patience growing strong out of the soil of sickness and suffering, of adversity and loss? Say what we will of the supreme value and beauty of self-sacrifice, of devotion and love to the point of abandonment of self-interest, glorify it as we do in every modern statement of the supreme ethical principle,—will you not find it nestling in the sanctities of every true home? Will you not find its perpetual revelation in almost every mother's heart?

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The pity of it is that we should live unregardful of these divine and holy qualities which give worth and sweetness to our daily life ; that any of these relations should become so familiar to us, so much taken for granted, that we become blind to the glory that suffuses them. We are living continually on holy ground, yet we forget to take the shoes from off our feet ; we are dwelling every day in very sight and touch of divinity yet we do not fall down and pray. These our brothers, our friends, our husbands and wives, our little children, are revealing to us some ray of that light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world, are bringing to us some fresh persuasion that it is God's world in which we live, and because they are of our own time and kin and country, we count them no prophets and fail to do them honor and reverence.

So I come to-day to you with this message, ending as it does in this one plea, that we shall more and more try to discover these holy attributes in the lives that are near us, in the relations that tie us to the

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present, so that out of our perception shall come new ennobling and transfiguring of all our life.



# The Summum-Bonum

## VI

### THE SUMMUM-BONUM

*Matt. xiii. 45, 46.*—The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

HERE was a romantic belief about the pearl among the oriental people which must have made a parable based upon it doubly attractive to them. They believed that the pearl was formed by the dew of heaven entering into the shell wherein it was found, the quality and form of the pearl depending on the purity of the dew, the state of the atmosphere and even the hour of the day when the dew entered the shell.

This romantic explanation has yielded to the more prosaic account of the formation of the pearl which we derive from modern science, but we may still cherish its beautiful suggestion, as a means at least of understanding why the pearl

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was so precious to the ancients. It was to them what the diamond is to moderns, the precious stone *par excellence*; if of considerable size and rare purity of color, its value was exceedingly great. The two famous pearls of Cleopatra, one of which she is said to have dissolved in her wine cup and to have drunk in honor of her lover, were reputed to have a value of nearly a million dollars.

Now Jesus, in casting about for something with which to compare the ideal of his heart, the mission of his life, that which he so often called the kingdom of heaven, compared it once among other things to a "goodly pearl," one that was fair and pure and perfect and of wondrous size, a pearl to be so coveted that the pearl-merchant, always on the lookout for such a prize, sold all the other pearls he had collected, got together all his available goods, bought the pearl and counted himself rich in its possession.

Now, I ask you to consider this: the value of the goodly pearl was not exclusive, it was inclusive. The value of all the

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lesser pearls and all the possessions which the merchant had before were included in the value of this fairest pearl of all. The other values were not lost and scattered; they were merged and concentrated in this one pearl of great price. It was the "*summum bonum*," the supreme good, reached not by the sacrifice of other goods, but by the inclusion of them all in one.

Herein, then, is the single thought for to-day, old and familiar enough to be sure, but still deserving, it may be, a word of fresh emphasis and interpretation.

We do not always realize that the acquisition of all real values is of this inclusive character. We have become so accustomed to measuring value in money and to regarding ourselves possessors of riches only as we possess this token of riches, that we are in danger of forgetting the destination and purpose of wealth. If we have ten dollars in our pocket-book we feel satisfied; that is, we have ten dollars' worth of satisfaction; the ownership and possession of the symbol create the feeling. But when we spend the ten dol-

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lars for food, or clothing, or books, or pictures, or the education of our children, or our church subscription,—we are apt to say somewhat regretfully,—“There, that ten dollar-piece is gone!” Yes! true enough, it is gone. But if it is wisely spent, then the value of it remains; it is included in what we bought with it; it abides with us in well-nourished bodies, in cultivated minds, in refined and ennobled feeling and imagination, in inspirations cheering us on to still nobler life. Wealth is not wealth, or welfare, until it presses on to some final use which includes within itself adequate satisfaction to the life of man.

The last chapter in every treatise on political economy is the chapter on the consumption of wealth, and it is a subject which even to the present has received inadequate treatment at the hands of the economists. They have been so fully absorbed in the theories of production, of distribution and exchange, that they have done scant justice to that for which all the other processes are but introductory steps; for the only rational conception of wealth

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is that which connects it with welfare, and welfare is determined by the ultimate forms of consumption to which all wealth is destined.

I have always had kindly feelings toward Mohammed for one saying of his. He is reputed to have said on one occasion, in one of his most inspired and lucid moments, "If I had two loaves of bread I would sell one of them and buy hyacinths to feed my soul."

Now, a mendicant friar of the middle ages might have said, "That is not good doctrine; give away both loaves of bread; live a life of piety and meditation, and depend upon others for your bread."

There is also a type of humanitarianism in modern times which would say, "We must not talk about hyacinths so long as the world needs the primary things so much, the bare necessities of life. We must take the extra loaf and give it to the poor."

I do not pretend to say that Mohammed's maxim expresses a final philosophy of life, or touches the heights of things, but only that so far as it goes it is in accord with the

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thought expressed in the parable of the goodly pearl. It is the exchange of one good thing for a relatively better thing. Mohammed felt that the hyacinths might be a goodlier pearl than the second loaf.

So, when you take the ten dollars which represent your toil and service, the outputting of energy, the giving of life, and put them into books which enshrine the thoughts of great men, or pictures which make ever present before you the vision of some great imagination, or into anything whatsoever which beautifies, ennobles and tranquilizes life, you should not say "there goes my hard-earned money," but rather you should say, "I have that bit of wealth secure; for the first time I have it really turned into abiding wealth."

To press the thought still closer to the parable, if you have had to calculate and choose and set aside things of lesser value in order that you may have the thing that is most worth the while, the thing which is going to be an abiding joy, a source of culture and inspiration to your children, a permanent benefit to the community in which

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you live, then it is still more like selling the lesser pearls to buy the one of great price.

You go into some houses and come away with the feeling that you have escaped from an upholstery store with the wares scattered in profusion on every side, and the smothered conviction that it is the mere accident of civilization which prevented the hostess from greeting you with gaudy feathers stuck in her hair and the primary colors arranged in due order upon her face. And that sort of barbaric vulgarity is contagious; imitation is the strongest instinct we have. It is sure to react upon some of the neighbors who pine in discontent until they can bedizen their own houses with as many yards of ribbon and cheap lace and staring colors. It will also react upon the children in those houses, making them think more of ornament and display than of better things.

What a delight it is to turn toward other homes, not homes of abundant wealth, probably; more than likely homes where you see the trace of struggle, of forethought, of discriminating choice, but

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from which you always carry away some feeling of inspiration, a sense of having been in a place where life means something serious and beautiful and worth the while. You feel that the people who live in that house have with gladness of heart let go the lesser pearls that they may have the one of great price; that having found an inspiration in what is best in the world they are not content until they and their children can slake their thirst at the living fountains.

It is a long process, to be sure, this through which we go in pursuit of the goodly pearl. In one sense it never comes to an end. It is with genuine satisfaction that we think of the books which in the process of the years have got tucked out of sight or on the top shelf out of reach. We have an almost victorious delight in the thought of those various household gods which one after another have been doomed to the attic, over whose door is always written, "All hope abandon ye who enter here." The changing tastes, the advancing ideals, the new sources of inspiration, are they not the



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token of our own inward growth? Are they not all so many different ways of selling the lesser pearls for the one of finer quality, of greater price?

We have been following the stream of this parable as it winds along, and have at length come to the point where it widens out, as when the tide strikes the river and makes it an arm of the sea.

There are implications in this parable which bring us out into deeps which we have not yet sounded.

The value of the goodly pearl was, I said, inclusive, not exclusive. The value of all the lesser pearls was included in it, justified and interpreted by it. No man could say that the merchant was a fool for selling the rest and buying this. He had all the rest in this and something besides.

It is, in other words, Christ's way of saying that there is one attitude to life, one conception and use of it, which is inclusive and universal; one thought of it which is the key to all the other thoughts; one way of living which embraces and harmonizes

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all other ways ; it is the way that he called the kingdom of heaven.

Now the monastic took that teaching of Christ and put this interpretation on it ; he said—In order to sell the lesser pearls and get the one of great price we must retire from the activities of this natural life, this mundane system, and we must give ourselves over to vigils and meditation and the life of the spirit. The goodly pearl awaits the saint who will make for it the great renunciation.

Then modern pietism has taken this teaching of Christ and put another interpretation on it. It has taught men to think of religion as a thing in itself ; as outside the life of man in the world ; it has treated man and talked to him as if he were an entire being apart from his relation to the world around him ; it has laid emphasis upon acts of worship, upon the pious mood, upon the act of faith as immunity for the future. It is not unfairly expressed in what Mr. Ruskin once reported of a sermon he had heard in an English church. The preacher reminded the people that it was generally

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admitted that the ways of trade were getting very bad in England, and that on that account they should be more thankful they were going to heaven; to which Mr. Ruskin pertinently adds: "It never seemed to occur to the preacher that perhaps it might be only through amendment of their ways in trade that they could ever get there."

Now it is needless to say that neither the monastic nor the pietistic thought was in the mind of Christ. Religion was to him the pearl of great price, not because it abandoned, but only because it included and interpreted, the whole of life.

When the day comes, and there are signs already of its dawning, in which we can think of religion in the inclusive rather than the exclusive way, as the key to all the chambers of life and not the remotest of those chambers itself, then it must make its own more genuine and powerful appeal.

It is not very long since I talked with a man whom I have been trying to interest in what we are doing here. I said, "I haven't seen you at church for a long time."

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“No,” he said, at first reluctantly, and then gravely and sadly,—“No! To tell you the truth, I have been so much absorbed in some investments and speculations that I have let that go.”

I could not but say,—“I’m sorry for you;” but I realized to the full the inadequacy of the ordinary religious appeal to meet a case like that. Of what avail to get a man interested in mere religion? To tell him that he was losing his soul? That he needed to consider his spiritual and eternal welfare? Yet I suppose that in the ultimate and deepest sense that is just what he was doing by his own confession,—losing his soul; losing the spiritual perspective of life.

The mere instinct of acquisition is a savage instinct; and it is the duty of a man with a soul in him, a potential soul, to be “throwing off the original sin of our savage inheritance,” and to be getting an understanding of the spiritual uses of material things; for is not that really what Christ meant when he said: “if you seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, the other things shall

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be added to you''? They shall go on, but with a new meaning and in a different relation to life.

The religious life which steadies a man and compels him to look at life as a whole, is likely to curb his acquisitive instincts, to prevent them from sweeping him into the maelstrom and to give him a calm and noble appreciation of what acquisition is for and of what is to be done with it. A man does need religious life, but not as the substitute for other life; he needs it as "the master light of all his seeing."

Does not the truth come home with convincingness to us all? Are we not all in peril of becoming victims to the forms and routines through which we do our work; of taking some lesser pearl for the one of great price? Is not the teacher in danger of thinking more of his system and method than of opening the mind toward the light? The man of law, of seeing justice and truth only through the medium of precedents and traditions; the politician, in danger of exalting machinery above statesmanship; the scientist, of reflecting so long

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on the uniformity of law that he misses the tokens of a " Presence interfusing all things ;" the theologian, of letting God slip away from him while he is arranging the logical syllogisms which are to demonstrate His eternal necessity?

If we rightly understood and appreciated these various uses and occupations of life, should we not see that at some point they came into contact with life as a whole? that they derived whatever worth and glory they have from the fact that they are parts of that eternal purpose which fulfills itself through the ages? Is it not to our loss that we have tried to think of religion as something apart from these fundamental uses of life? that we have tried to graft religion on to the wild stock, expecting new and different fruitage, rather than to bring all this underlying life out into its religious and divine significance? Of course, one has to take full account of temperamental differences and of the hesitancy which arises from the intellectual temper of the times. One can not compel another to adopt and sign his creed ; he can not stand

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over him with a lash until he pronounces the name of God without stammering or shrinking. But that a man should go on with his partial life and not know that it is partial, not know that in its very partialness it is still part of the infinite whole, "a fragment of the song above,"—this above all is the sad and pathetic feature of our life.

And this is the teaching of the parable of the pearl. It was worth while giving up the lesser pearls for the one of great price, because that was so precious in itself, and its value hid and included the values of all the others which bought it.

In like manner somewhere around us, if we will seek for it, is an interpretation of our lives which will lift them up into dignity and worth; there is some justification of these tasks to which we give our days and our strength, beyond the need of bread-winning, for "man liveth not by bread alone." Is it not worth the while to seek out that meaning? Is it not worth the while to feel the unrest, the partialness, the unsatisfactoriness of life, if somewhere at

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last we may find the great peace and know in the secret places of our life that “round our incompleteness flows His completeness, round our restlessness His rest?”



# The Master Light of Our Seeing

## VII

### THE MASTER LIGHT OF OUR SEEING

*John* 4. 24.—God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

ONE never comes upon this fresh and profound utterance of Jesus without a momentary feeling of the disproportion and incongruity between the thought uttered and the person to whom it was said. There is something imperishable and inexhaustible in the thought, though the form of words is familiar enough; but they fell for the first time upon the ears of a giddy and gossipy woman whose mind could not keep still upon one subject long enough to perceive the drift of it, but hopped from one idea to another with fatal inconsequence. Familiar with the current catch-words of the Samaritan religion she shot them forth at Jesus, one after the other, mainly to cover the confusion to herself of an interview which was fast weaving its

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implications around her personal life. She would fain engage Jesus in a debate of words upon the ancient feud between Jews and Samaritans touching the true place of worship: "You say that men ought to worship at Jerusalem; we say that they ought to worship here on Mt. Gerizim; tell me which is right." How accurately such a question registers the animus of the ecclesiastical disputes of every age, and how clearly also it reveals how the fact of deep and imperishable interest always slips through the meshes of the net that was meant to catch it! These Samaritans and Jews who were frittering away their time in a debate over the place of worship could not get beyond that question; what worship meant, what the place was for, when it was ascertained; what clear vision, what holier purpose were to enter life through that worship,—these were problems which had not yet come above their horizon. Yet here against the background of this Samaritan woman's superficial and parrot-like repetition of the current opinions there is thrown this contrasting thought of Jesus which, in

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its implications, is the final word upon the subject,—“ God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Its finality lies in the very simplicity of the thought; in the breadth and inclusiveness of it; it is authoritative, not because Jesus said it, but because of its self-witnessing character before the deepest instincts of the soul. Whenever we consider the deepest facts and relations of life we see how they cohere and find their unity in a penetrating perception such as this.

It is, therefore, not so much the signification as the significance of this thought of Christ that I want you to consider to-day; not the meaning of it so much as the import of it. We are not going to spend our time in trying to get a definition of God, in trying to construct a definition out of these words, insisting that it means this and not that. Let us rather try to see how they are explanatory of facts that lie imbedded in our very nature; how they throw as bright a light as has ever been thrown upon

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fundamental necessities and desires of human life.

Must it not, in fact, be said that there is a certain unsatisfactoriness and fruitlessness, in all those "proofs of the existence of God" upon which great minds have laid such stress? They prove almost everything except that which most needs proof or else that which is so instinctive and self-evident as not to need proof at all. Have you never reflected upon such a proof of the existence of God as is found in the familiar argument of Paley from the evidences of design, and found yourself in just this attitude of dumb helplessness? Of course the man who found a watch by the wayside would be right in concluding that so intricate a piece of mechanism must have had an ingenious and intelligent designer, and equally, of course, one, looking around him on the universe, would conclude that so vast and intricate a mechanism must also have had a designer equal in intelligence and skill to the result; and of course again the simple minded Bedouin, who has figured so extensively in arguments of this kind, was right in saying

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when he was asked how he knew there was a God,—“In the same way that I know on looking at the sand when a man or beast has crossed the desert,—by his footprints in the world around me.”

We feel helpless before such a demonstration just because it is so true—so true in its place. But it leaves us with the interrogation still in our hearts, “where is God, that I may find him? When shall I come and appear before him?” To prove that God exists does not of itself give dignity and peace to life. The proof may be of considerable value as collateral security, but it can not be drawn on for current need. It does not touch that restless craving which the psalmist uttered for us all when he said, “My soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.”

It is just that desire, deep and fundamental in the soul, which gives us the key to religion the world over, and that desire is universal. It may be hid away from our own consciousness for a time, just as for a time we may not be clearly conscious that we are social beings, and that it is not good

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for us to be alone. But St. Augustine spoke for all mankind when he said, "O God, thou madest us for thyself, and our hearts are unquiet until they rest in thee." Religion has its basis and impulse, not in the desire of man to find an adequate proof of the existence of God, but in his desire to find unity and meaning for his own life, in his hunger for the sense of harmony and repose which alone give life strength and stability, and men will go in search of that to the ends of the earth; it is the pearl of great price for which they will sell all other pearls until they possess it.

"A human consciousness can not exist," we are told, "without some dawning of reverence, of an awe and aspiration which is as different from fear as it is from presumption." And it is this reverence, this sense of a subjection which elevates us, of an obedience which makes us free, this consciousness of a power which curbs and humiliates us, but at the same time draws us up to itself, which is the essence of religion and the source of all man's higher life.

Now, this it is which is universal and

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persistent, which is in the experience of every tribe and nation, in the depths of every man's soul, though at times it may be hidden away from his consciousness and is always, perhaps, mingled with other things. The thread running through all the labyrinthine paths of man's tortuous experience is this persisting consciousness that there is something which can "give unity to our divided and finite existence and lift us above its division and finitude;" that consciousness which found expression in the words of St. Augustine and in the similar words of the psalm, "My soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is."

If we allow the man who is determined to prove the existence of God to come back on the stage for a moment he will be sure to say, "the desire for God does not prove there is a God; a man's thirst in the desert is no evidence that there is somewhere near an oasis with its gushing stream of water." Truly so, but the capacity for hunger and thirst is but the urgent claim of physical nature for that which is its proper suste-

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nance. Hunger and thirst are the evidences that food and drink exist somewhere, and the nameless and persistent hunger of the race for that which will explain its life, for that which will give it peace, is the testimony to the presence somewhere of that which can put its questionings to rest and give the peace that passeth understanding. If the persistent hunger for God, the unquenchable desire to find some object which will "gather to a focus all the meaning of life," is the fundamental thing in religion, then, of course, in this sense, all religions from the beginning of the world are true and genuine religions; a false religion is a contradiction in terms. The hunger of the heart can not be satisfied with a lie any more than the hunger for bread can be satisfied with a stone.

"In even savage bosoms  
There are longings, yearnings, strivings  
For the good they comprehend not;  
And the feeble hands and helpless,  
Groping blindly in the darkness,  
Touch God's right hand in that darkness  
And are lifted up and strengthened."



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There are partial, inadequate, and even immoral expressions of the religious impulse, but a wholly false religion there can not be, just because the fundamental impulse and motive, the thirst for God, in which all religion has its origin, is necessarily the most genuine and holy thing in the heart of man.

But it is nevertheless possible for the religious impulse to lose its way, to get tangled up with other things, to make other things uppermost. It is quite possible for religion to get side-tracked. Many and many a time it has got side-tracked. There will very readily occur to us three familiar forms of the side-tracking of the religious spirit.

We see it first of all in the part which the ritual and ceremonial aspect of religion has placed throughout its history. All rites and symbols have their probable origin in man's instinctive effort to give external and objective embodiment to the impulse working within his life. They are a dramatic expression and satisfaction of the spiritual tendency of life. They represent,

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now in the crude and dreadful form of bloody sacrifice, now in the softened expressions of sacraments and liturgies, the effort of the human spirit to find that which will focus the meaning of life; but the time comes when for many the symbol overshadows that which it was meant to symbolize; when the keeping of the sacrament and the performance of the liturgical form stand for worship and are allowed to pass for the religious life.

We see another side-tracking of the religious impulse in the exaggerated emphasis upon emotional life. There are many historic examples. The eighteenth century deism, which it has been said was intended to "knock feeling in the head, issued at length in a new burst of feeling." It found expression on the religious side in the extreme reaction from a dry and formal religion into one of emotion and the free play of the religious sensibilities. Many of the most influential and popular embodiments of religion in this century have been a sort of "Puritanism of the emotions." We find the extreme illustrations of it in the

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types of religion prevailing among the colored people in many localities where religion is the riot of the emotions, of the untrained sensibility and the uncurbed imagination. But this is only the extreme illustration of a typical condition. The touchstone of one type of religion during this century has been the revival, with its power to unloose the dumb tongues of men and make them bear testimony to a new life.

The third instance of which we will speak is the side-tracking of religion into the field of ethics. When we consider how ceremonialism and emotionalism have in turn been substituted for religion, the reaction into an expression of the religious life, in which duty or conduct get all the emphasis, seems natural enough. It is then that James' definition of religion comes into vogue with new force—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the father is this, to visit the widows and the fatherless and to keep one's self unspotted from the world."

The reaction is necessary and natural enough, but when all is said must we not

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still maintain that the exchange of a liturgical routine or an emotional routine for a routine of conduct is not to touch the high-water mark of religion? for great as is the word duty—strong and stalwart and noble as it is—duty is still not the final word ; it is not the finest, the divinest attitude of the human soul. Duty can not of itself focus the whole meaning of life ; it can summon to the struggle, but it can not give life its sense of harmony and rest, can not interpret it in its wholeness. Notwithstanding all travesties of its meaning, Paul saw with a divine insight when he said, “Ye are saved by faith.”

Thus we draw near to the thought of Christ: “God is a spirit and they who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” It is a simple and direct way of saying that God is everywhere, that he dwells in all life, that he is immanent.

But this does not describe or define God ; it does not represent him to the senses or the imagination ; it simply cuts the strings of that ancient prejudice which tied him down to one special spot. It is almost the equiva-

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lent of saying that God is "in the air." And it is quite the equivalent of saying that religion is in the air ; it is an atmosphere about human life. It is not something distinct from life and the relations which we sustain to one another and the world about us ; it is not a new relation which may be added to the other relations of our life ; it is rather the air which we breathe ; it is " the master light of all our seeing."

Something like this seems to be the inspiring suggestion in these words of Christ,—"God is a spirit" ; he is the surrounding and indwelling life ; religion is the instinctive response to that great fact ; it is worship in spirit and truth. It is the reverent use of our own bodies and minds because God is in them ; the reverent attitude toward every fellow-man, every dumb creature, every tree and flower of the field, because in them also the divine life is immanent.

It was because Christ thought of religion in a way that was at once simple and broad that he was able to see how spontaneous it was in the life of a child ; how fitting a symbol the child was of the kingdom of

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God. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." It is because we have so generally come to think of religion in a forced and artificial way, as something of the nature of a contagious disease which may be contracted if we are properly exposed to it, which keeps so many people in painfully strained and reticent relations with their children.

It may seem paradoxical, but might not that be the most religious home where the least was said directly about religion as a thing in itself. For it is not a thing in itself; it can not be; it is spurious and counterfeit when it becomes a thing in itself, something to be worked for and lived for and organized for as a self-existent entity. Unless it is the atmosphere of the home or the community where life develops in reverence, and in a sense of the blessedness and sanctity of life, then what can possibly save it from the unreligious estimate and use? "God is spirit," and so religion is that attitude to life in which man breathes life and quickening power.

Through the perception of what is sug-

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gested in Christ's words to the Samaritan woman the religious life would be kept true to its own genuine movement ; there can be no side-tracking, no substitution of a subordinate thing for the main thing ; for while religion will become deepened and purified by the agency of all the forces which accompany human life in its progress, it will always maintain its own integrity, its own surpassing greatness and glory by being still the air in which man breathes, the light in which he sees.

## Question That Could Not Be Answered

### VIII

## THE QUESTION THAT COULD NOT BE ANSWERED

*John* x. 24—How long dost thou hold us in suspense?  
If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly.

SOMEWHERE among the corridors of that great temple at Jerusalem a little group of men had been holding a hurried but eager consultation. In another of its corridors the person who was the object of their conference was walking back and forth. It was the annual feast of the dedication of the temple, and because it was the winter season Jesus was walking there in Solomon's porch instead of in the open air, in the company of the birds of the heavens and the flowers of the field. Back and forth there he was walking, perhaps alone wrapped in his own calm and deep reflections, perhaps with a friend or a disciple, glad in the companionship of a human heart.

This group of men yonder, moved by



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feelings of mingled curiosity, wonder and hostility, with perhaps a little genuine sympathy on the part of some, were resolving on a course of action. The young prophet from Nazareth had now for months been drawing unusual attention to himself. He had inaugurated no movement of a political or military character ; it was simply a series of humane and beneficent deeds, and a certain new spirit and impulse of life for which he was responsible. But no one could shine in that Jewish firmament for any length of time with more than ordinary brilliance without having the question spring up here and there regarding him : Is he the Messiah?

The condition of things was in some respects like the political temper of the people in our land in the year of a presidential election. People are asking about this man and that one—is he likely to be a candidate? Has he the necessary qualifications? Is he likely to declare himself as seeking the nomination? The cases are not entirely parallel, but the play of motives and sentiments is much the same.

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There was a popular sensitiveness, needing but a touch to be turned into turbulence; there was a disposition to discuss the Messianic possibilities of any one who had done anything out of the ordinary routine. John the Baptist had been the subject of this popular discussion, but even before the imprisonment and death of John the tide of favor was turning in the direction of Jesus of Nazareth.

The chief success of Jesus and his most enthusiastic following were in Galilee. It was not so easy to create enthusiasm in Jerusalem; not so easy for any one to get a following there. Jerusalem was the capital and it was the ecclesiastical center; it was the seat of culture and learning. The schools were there; the great rabbis were there; the priesthood was centered there; and these men had tests of their own which they applied,—tests which perhaps the simpler-minded peasants of Galilee would not think of applying. At Jerusalem credentials would count for as much as character. The Galileans would be content with asking what a man could do; they had been

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profoundly moved by what Jesus had done among them.

But with the religious doctors all that was of inconsiderable account. They wanted to know what were the antecedents of a man, what were his vouchers and passports. The Messiah when he comes must be the prescribed Messiah; he must conform to the Messiah of their teaching; to the idea of him which they have formulated and impressed upon their minds.

They were always meeting the argument of deeds and character with the counter-argument of credentials and authority. If one chanced to say,—“This is of truth the prophet; this is the Christ”—back came the answer: “What! Doth Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?”

If the blind man pointed to his opened eyes as the ground of his gratitude and faith in Jesus, was there not some proper scribe at his side to reprove him at once and to remind him that God had spoken to

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Moses, but “as for this man we know not whence he is?” Did not the gentle Nathanael himself, who became a disciple, share the national prejudice and feel staggered for the moment, as his question implies,—“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

This is very instructive because it helps us to understand a tendency and disposition which always exist in the world,—that of estimating the character and work of men, not directly in the light of their lives and deeds, but indirectly in the light of what is merely official and accidental. The world always has its contingent of people who must first locate and label a man before they can understand him or be able to estimate the truth of what he says.

They must first know whether the man belongs to their party or their church, before they have a basis for determining the truth of what he says. This is precisely the attitude of these men of Christ's time, and they maintained their attitude with a heat and acrimony which has never been

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surpassed, though indeed it never wholly subsides.

It is an exhibition of this spirit which we meet in the question which was asked of Jesus as he walked in Solomon's porch. This group of men had decided on a course of action; they had resolved to submit the question of Messiahship directly to Jesus himself. So they crowd about him and their spokesman puts the question,—“How long dost thou keep us in suspense? If thou art the Christ tell us plainly.”

It looks like an ingenuous and simple question. It has all the air of artlessness. But you can see at once that if they persuade Jesus to admit that he is the Messiah they intend to deluge him with their questions about origin and credentials and authority. They will do it under the guise of being simply seekers after truth, but they will do it nevertheless. There are possibly elements of genuine wonder, confusion and perplexity of mind involved in their attitude, but in the main the whole proceeding betrays the lack of the simplicity and

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candor which mark the genuine seeker after truth.

But let us leave now the motives of the questioners and turn to the question which they asked and to the manner in which Jesus treated it. He did not answer it directly. He seemed to evade an answer. He said: "I told you and ye believe not; the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me." It was customary for Christ to meet certain questioners and their questions in this way. Once he was asked by some of the scribes: "By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?" And he turned the question aside by asking whether or not they believed that John the Baptist was sent of God or only of men.

Now why is this? Why should any question be parried or evaded? Grant even that the motive of the questioner is wrong, is not the simple and direct answer always the best answer? When this group of men crowded around Jesus with the question on their lips,—If thou art the Christ tell us

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plainly, why did he not tell them plainly and answer "Yes" or "No"?

Upon the answer to this question depends the answer to a great many questions like it. Therefore, let us seriously and attentively consider this one.

The case seems a simple one. It looks on the face of it as if so direct a question could be answered by yes or no; but it is not so simple as that, and when we think of it we shall find that it was not a question which Christ could have answered by yes or no.

He could not have given that kind of answer for the reason that, while such an answer may have met the terms of the question and may have satisfied the questioner, it would not have gone to the heart of the matter and would have diverted the attention of the questioner from the real to a superficial thing. These men who came with their question represented a class who judge people more by credentials than by character; who understand a person or a movement or a situation by the label which designates it. There were certain

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ideas, hopes and tendencies which, by those people around Christ, were collectively designated by the title, 'Messiah.' That word became at length a stereotyped expression to represent the current ideas and expectations. They understood, or supposed they understood, a person if he could be classified by means of that formula which was familiar to them all. This is the explanation of the anxiety manifested by so many to get Christ to accept the Messianic label. If they can only learn whether or not he will apply the stereotyped form to himself, then they will know what to think of him; they will know how to estimate his deeds and his words. It all expresses itself in that urgent question,—If thou art the Christ tell us plainly.

Suppose Jesus had said,—“Yes, I am the Christ.” What then? Those who had a hostile purpose would have immediately plied him with questions about his authority and credentials, but there would have been a remnant whom the answer would have satisfied. They would have gone away contented, saying: “That is all we



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want to know ; he says he is the Messiah ; now we understand him." But would they have understood him? Far from it ; for in all these things which affect the constant movement of our life, these things which affect what we may call the dynamic relations of life, the labels and the stereotyped formulas hinder and mislead more than they help. They are a device for doing away with the necessity of thinking for ourselves, of looking at life as it is, of seeing the fact and of judging of life by life itself.

Let us confess that a label is a very useful thing in its place and when confined to the purposes which it is intended to serve. A label is useful on the backs of the books in a library. It is very convenient to have the titles designated in that way. We can tell without the trouble of taking it down from the shelf whether a book which resembles a dozen others is a volume of poetry or philosophy or political economy. But the case is different if, after hearing one read for hours from the volume of poetry, we should bring him a handful of

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labels and ask him to designate on the back what the book was. It would be pertinent to reply,—“If you do not already know, the label will not help you.” And this was for substance what Christ said to those men: “I told you and ye believe not; the works that I do in my Father’s name, these bear witness of me.”

So a direct answer of yes or no would not have been the true answer; it would not really have helped the questioner. If we want our books labeled on the back in order that we may know in which alcove and on which shelf to put them and care nothing for the contents of them, then one would be less helpful to us by pasting the proper labels on the back than he would be if he simply turned us over to the books themselves and said: “Read and find out for yourself what they are.”

Therefore we find the wise Christ taking always this very course. He seeks to turn men from the name to the deed; from the formal and stereotyped term to the essential principle; from the label to life.

He did, indeed, at the outset, according

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to Luke's account, indicate something like a program of action; in the synagogue at Nazareth, in a reference to the prophet Isaiah, he intimated what he believed the work of the Messiah would be, a very different work, too, from that which the people were expecting. Then straightway he enters on a life which in its broad outlines was indicated by that great prophecy of "the acceptable year of the Lord," the year of human emancipation from every kind of bondage.

But from every appeal of men to put on the Messianic label he turned away. You remember how his friend and kinsman, John the Baptist, sent his messengers to Jesus with the pathetic and pleading question: "Art thou he that should come, or do we still look for another?" Not even to that dear friend of his, that man whose work he had himself, in a sense, taken up, would he send back a satisfying answer; not the answer of the stereotyped formula; to him also he must say only,— "Look and see; the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are

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cleansed and the deaf hear, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." "Go and tell that to John," he said to the messengers, "and tell him also that blessed is he who shall find no occasion of stumbling in me."

And from that time to this time when the men crowded around him in the temple corridor, Christ was pursuing that course. He felt the stern necessity of turning men from the title of the book to its contents and of telling them to see, to read, to think for themselves.

This is the chief reason why Christ did not give a direct and simple answer to the question; he was not willing, by the adoption of a title, to send men off believing that they understood him because they understood the general and current meaning of a formula which he had accepted as applying to himself. He was not willing even to that degree to take men out of the vital currents of life, to turn them aside from the real and concrete experiences of life to the easy adoption of an abstract term; he would not

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even to that degree give them a stone instead of bread.

The applications of this principle to life are direct and important. There is almost no department of human life in which men do not coin formulas and labels which sum up certain tendencies and phases of belief and action. These become the watch-words, the rallying-cries, the standards of the religious, the political and the social life. There are thousands of people who would listen to an exposition of some principle of religious faith and life and not know whether they believed it or not until they learned to which school of thought the speaker belonged. There are multitudes who would hearken to an exposition of the current national issues and not be quite certain whether to applaud or withhold applause until they had made sure of the political affiliation of the speaker. We have seen men time and again in public meetings listen to the arguments which were intended to shape opinion and direct decision, and then be utterly unable to decide on which side of the question to vote

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until they had caught the approving nod of their leader. The masses of men know the meaning of a shibboleth, of a party watchword ; they understand the uses of a label, though it may reveal nothing as to the real character of what is labeled. For even a jar of precious ointment might, by some mischance, have a skull and cross-bones label on the cover.

This illustrates what we may call the influence of the label ; it shows us that the label covers a multitude of ignorances, and that in many instances it is merely the notification that at that point men have stopped thinking.

When men with too easy complaisance permit themselves to be designated by the current formulas in any domain of life, when by the adoption of a label they leave it to be inferred that they represent what the label indicates to the men who use it, they have done that much to stop the wheels of life. It is not enough to say that you are this, that or the other ; you must make men see what the meaning is behind the formula—to break up the formula, in-

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deed, if necessary, in order to have the meaning seen. You must be able to answer them in the spirit of Christ's answer to John, "Go tell John the things that you see and hear. Do not tell him that I am the Messiah ; that is nothing ; tell him that the blind see, the deaf hear and the poor have good tidings preached to them."

But there is a further reason why Christ could not have given a single "yes" to this question. It would not have been a faithful and helpful answer to the people themselves, but besides this it would not have been an adequate answer so far as Jesus himself was concerned. There was no formula, no stereotyped expression, even then or now, that was adequate to the expression of all that he was and knew himself to be. The Messiah idea was entrenched in the life of the Jewish people ; it was the term which represented the mission and work of the coming emancipator, and it had to be reckoned with. It would have the same kind of bearing upon a man that official titles of any sort have ; to some they would signify something important

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and essential, to others they would be unimportant, of some transient and superficial value, but easily put aside in the interest of larger and truer distinctions. In our day, a man who serves his fellow-men through the medium of preaching is designated as a clergyman, and is entitled to be addressed as reverend. That title and distinction doubtless seem to some a matter of considerable consequence. Many, on the other hand, would be glad to have it put away and forgotten, because it is not merely unimportant but oftentimes misleading, tending to perpetuate ecclesiastical distinctions and to prevent the growth of the real and human aspects of Christianity and of the relation of men to men.

These titles are simply a part of the inherited furniture of a religious past, the heirlooms of ecclesiasticism. Men who serve their fellow-men in certain definite ways find themselves the natural inheritors of them, and they are often harmless enough. To a real and genuine man they do not signify much either one way or the other, but a real man, on the other hand,



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can not possibly measure his life and influence and work by means of them ; he must realize that his life means something more and his work something better than the clerical and ecclesiastical labels can possibly represent.

So the title, Messiah, was simply that which represented the work of the man who was to serve the nation in a certain way. There were many men in Jewish history who called themselves Messiahs, and who were regarded as such by the people, and Christ must have looked on that title in just the way that a genuine person would look upon anything that was merely a title and formula. He was the Messiah indeed. If any one could with truth claim that title Christ could claim it. If any one had arisen as the real emancipator, the true savior of his people and of mankind, it was Jesus. And he could have said to all men with the most absolute truth, "I am the Messiah indeed." There were occasions in fact when he did claim the title and declare that in him were fulfilled the hopes and longings of the older prophets.

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But that was not all. He knew that the office and the title did not exhaust the meaning of his life. He knew that they could not adequately interpret all that he was and all that he wished to do. Therefore, not only in justice to the people who asked him to tell them plainly if he was the Christ, but in justice to himself he must tell them neither yes nor no, but must point them to what he had said and done. This aspect of Christ's answer also has its bearing on our current life, for if the Messiah-idea was not adequate to express all that was there in the personality and character of Christ, if the Jewish label was not able to describe him, is it not true that no name, no title, no office under which men have tried to understand and interpret Christ can be exhaustive of his personality?

Men have lost something of the real influence of Christ by confining themselves to considerations of his offices and nature. It seems so simple and so easy to confront one with the question,—Do you believe that Christ is divine? Or do you believe he is merely human? It seems to many that in

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asking a question like that, they have asked something that is really ultimate and structural. So that to face a man with a question like that, to corner him with it, to compel him straightway to tell plainly which of the two things he thinks, seems an ingenious and adroit way of getting at the ultimate phase of his faith. But it is like the question which was asked of Christ, and it is more often than otherwise simply unanswerable in terms of yes and no. For there is nothing in life that is merely human or merely divine. The assumed antithesis is not there; the chasm does not exist. And Christ would find it as difficult, as impossible, to answer in a word the burning questions of our modern theology as he did this central question of the Jewish theology. For consider what the plain answers to these questions about Christ have yielded! One man gets his plain answer: "Yes, Christ is divine; he is God." Then his deified Christ becomes an object of worship, moved into the heavens apart, his work for man accomplished and regarded as mediatorial in a purely external sense.

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Another man goes away with the opposite answer: "Christ is human; he is only a man after all," and though the thought yields comfort, a certain relief and inspiration, yet there remains still some thought of the chasm between human and divine; Christ is claimed for humanity as exclusively as before he was claimed for divinity.

But right there in the exclusiveness of either claim, in the assumption of the impassable gulf between God and man, lies the fatal mistake.

Therefore no man has a right to fix the terms of his question in an exclusive way, to confront us with the alternative and compel us to say plainly whether we believe in a Christ that is merely divine or one that is merely human. The only true answer ever to make to questions like that is to say,—I do not believe in a mere anything.

So then, when we really come to feel that the personality of Jesus has a sweep and an influence that can not possibly be measured in the current formulas about him, our interest in the formulas will abate

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and we shall seek to put ourselves in the way of feeling the power and the gracious touch of that life which is still with us as of old, for "faith hath yet its Olivet and love its Galilee."

"We can be persons and feel the influence of persons, but personality is something other than any definition of it."

Is it not so in our relations with one another? You come in contact with a fellow-man and long after you have forgotten his name, his office, his rank or place in life, you remember the grasp of the friendly hand, the expression of the soul through the eyes, the new outlook upon life through a few inspiring words.

Above all is this true of Jesus. Greater devotion has never been paid to the name of anyone than to his name, even though it be often a false devotion, missing the real secret of his spirit. What then, when men shall learn the secret of Jesus and submit themselves to the full influence of his personality! What will be, when he shall have ceased to be a shibboleth and shall dwell in the hearts of men as a perpetual

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inspiration and power ! When the “religion which has taken Jesus for its object becomes the religion which Jesus professed ! When his faith shall be the faith of man, his thought of God our thought, his thought of man ours, his outlook on the whole of life, our outlook !

To ancient and modern questioners there is one answer,—“ I told you and ye believe not ; the works that I do in my Father’s name these bear witness of me.”

The way out of all chaos of the heart and mind, the path which leads far away from the cliffs of despair and darkness, is the way in which Jesus walked. And the light which enters life is not that which comes from the acceptance of authority, but that which proceeds from the influence of a life which has in it no weakness nor any thing that is dark. It is as Jesus said, —“ He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

# The Reserves of Life

## IX

### THE RESERVES OF LIFE

*Psalm xxxii. 7.*—Thou art my hiding-place.

THE temple at Jerusalem was constructed, one court or sanctuary within another, each expressing some new degree of sacredness and privacy. The outer portion was the court of the Gentiles, a common meeting place for the people of all races and faiths, a kind of fringe of the temple where the religious life shaded off into the common intercourse and traffic of secular concerns; inscriptions in Greek and Latin were posted in this outer court warning all Gentiles that upon penalty of death they must not pass this outer corridor; then followed in order the court of women; the court of Israelites accessible to Jewish men; the court of the priests, for the officials of religion only; the holy place which contained the table of shew-bread, the golden candlestick and the altar of incense; and last of all the

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innermost shrine, the holy of holies, utterly empty and dark, shut off from the other courts by the thick impenetrable veil, entered only once a year by the high priest of the nation on the great day of atonement, when he went there alone after long vigils and fasting to make offering for the sins of the people.

Thus step by step, court by court, God was put at a distance from the common, secular life of the people; he was made inaccessible to its ordinary and familiar aspects; he was brought near only by a series of mediated relations in which the indirect and official communion took the place of the more direct and personal. The temple, which was the supreme symbol of the Jewish faith, was a splendid contrivance for the expression of the inapproachableness of God, for what we sometimes call the transcendence of the divine nature. It stands in entire contrast with a religion like that of Greece in which gods and men were ever mingling; where the gods indeed were "immortal men, and the men were mortal gods." Hegel called Judaism the



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religion of sublimity and the Greek the religion of beauty; and perhaps the chief difference between sublimity and beauty is that the sublime extracts the spiritual from the natural and seeks to understand and reverence the spiritual by itself, while beauty is a recognition of the spiritual quality within nature, inseparable from it, unintelligible apart from it.

The Jewish prophets, even in their sublimest poetry, it has been said, "chose the stormy agencies of nature as the symbol of the divine rather than the more ordinary and apparently regular phenomena of nature. The action of God on the world is regarded by them as disturbing, transforming, miraculously interfering with the usual order of things, rather than establishing and maintaining that order; it is treated, to use the language of geology, as catastrophic rather than evolutionary. Or, if nature is regarded as revealing him, it is rather negatively than positively, by the way in which she trembles before him, or shrinks up into nothing in his presence. The leading thought of the poetry of Israel

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is that of the transcendent might and glory of a being for whom 'Lebanon is not sufficient to burn nor the beasts thereof for a burnt offering,' and who 'taketh up the isles as a very little thing.' "

Therefore the construction of the Jewish temple symbolizes the pervading element in their religious life, the thought of the sublimity, the might, the solitary and inapproachable holiness of the transcendent God. He comes most potently and effectually into relation with human life in that holy of holies where he is at the greatest remove from the personal life and touches it only through the highest development of the principle of mediation.

There is nothing more interesting, or more fruitful to thought, than to trace the working of these two contrasted but supplementary ideas, to watch the working of the principles of sublimity and beauty, transcendence and immanence, remoteness and nearness,—to see how these ideas, both in their separateness and their blending, have affected the life of the world; nor is it difficult to discover that the process is still

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going on ; that stable equilibrium has not yet been attained ; that final synthesis of the two principles is not yet entirely made, and that consequently we have not yet reached the final condition of the religious life.

But leaving this suggestion, let us to-day follow a different clew. For without question a great and true thought was struggling for expression in that symbolic embodiment of the Hebrew faith. Although we can not permanently rest in the thought of the remoteness of God, which was conveyed in the holy of holies, no more can we feel that the final word was spoken in those religions which brought the gods down from Olympus to live with men on too familiar terms. Some word evidently remains to be spoken ; we feel the incompleteness of it all as we look on the solemn scenes of that Hebrew ritual ; but when we turn from that to look on the religious life of Greece or Rome, that "untroubled pagan world of beauty," we rightly feel that the fundamental lack in them was that they had not as yet fully "wakened to a soul."

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Now in the Hebrew faith there had taken place the wakening of the soul ; there was a vivid consciousness of the spiritual element in life ; but it was, so to say, a too sensitive consciousness ; the soul was awake, but it stood naked before God ; it was waiting to be clothed upon ; it stood in shame before its Maker, conscious more of the differences between them than of the ties of kinship.

So we have, upon the one hand, a religious development in which the soul stands self-conscious, but naked and ashamed, that consciousness creating the transcendent thought of God and symbolizing itself in the holy of holies ; on the other hand, a religious development in which the soul as yet lies dormant, the spiritual element submerged in the natural, and the divine life immanent chiefly because the spiritual nature has not yet developed to the point which makes the repulsion of God the first instinctive effort of the soul.

Therefore it is not difficult to see where lies the permanent truth that is symbolized in that half-truth of the holy of holies ;

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for it emphasizes the great fact that although God is immanent, dwelling within all life, coming near to all life, "closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet," yet he is by no means exhausted in these forms of life that appear; he is not spread out over nature as a sort of veneer to give it finish and the appearance of solidity and value. There are reserve elements in the nature of God, and deep upon deep which no man has yet fathomed and no man can.

This Hebrew temple with its outer and inner courts does afford some genuine hint of the relations in which God mediates himself to human life, for there is no more august and important truth than that which we are beginning to realize in these latter days, that the walls between the secular and the sacred in the old-time sense are battered down; that God is in the marts of trade; in the hurrying, swift-moving wheels of industry, moving back and forth in all the transformations of the material life. In all this outermost court of life, the court of the Gentiles, God dwells. It has been the

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supreme task of our age, it is even now the most significant of its undertakings to reassert this truth, lost in the mazes of the ecclesiastical consciousness. "The Gospel of the Secular Life" is the inscription which more and more are writing upon the banners that are to float over their temples of worship and prayer; and no effort can be more praiseworthy or more deserving of success than the effort to make men hear the echoes of the divine footsteps in these outer corridors of life where they have long ceased to look for God and to expect his presence.

Nevertheless the supreme relative value of this undertaking should not confuse us, should not blind our eyes to the complete truth; for just as "the life is more than meat and the body than raiment," so there are reserve elements in the nature of God of which all this secular process discloses nothing.

So again, if we leave the outermost court, the court of traffic, of selling of doves and sheep, and approach that interior court, the place where poets dwell, who are the

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priests ministering in this holy place, there also we discover the divine presence in the quiet beauty of nature, in the loveliness of the flowers, in the onmoving of the seasons, in sun and moon and stars, in the noiseless growth of the grass, in the throbbing tides of the sea, in the brooding care of the mother-bird, in the storm and the avalanche, in all the thousand moods, the ceaseless movement of this outward universe. When we feel the presence that "disturbs us with the joy of elevated thoughts," when we look on all

"The splendor of the morning sky,  
And all the stars in company,  
And think, How beautiful it is !—  
Our soul says—there is more than this."

And there is more than this. There is yet the most holy place, the quiet solitudes of the soul, the place unoccupied and dark until God comes and illumines it with his own light. God is immanent in nature indeed ; God is present in the whole secular process indeed. We have not to take from all that side of life one straw's weight to be

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able to assert with ever-increasing emphasis that God is still more intimately in the solitudes of the heart of man, for why was man created if it were not that the divine life was striving for some more adequate expression of itself than is found in the growth of the grass and the pulsing of the tides?

There is always one moment, one stage in the transformation of material conditions, when it is almost impossible to say whether the material is in one condition or the other. There is one point where the solid is just passing into the liquid, and the liquid is just passing into vapor.

So there is one word which has had a curious history in the development of human thought, a word that has had to bear more weight than almost any other, and because of its misuses has been the occasion of more bewilderment and conflict than almost any other. It is the word "person" or "personality." Personality is that quality of life which bestows a worthy meaning upon the saying of the Greeks that the gods were "immortal men" and



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men were "mortal gods." It is a word descriptive of that fusion or passage from one state into another which men have tried to express under the idea of incarnation. Personality is the meeting place of the divine and the human. Or, to restate the same thought in the words of a friend,—  
"Personality (in man) has itself been emerging as it has been laying hold of the personality of God; its growth has been keeping time with its own activity. Hence when we look at the history of religion to discover what the mind of man has reported concerning God, we are examining a process in which not only has the tool employed left its mark upon the result, but the material dealt with has in turn left its mark upon the tool. In other words, we are studying a process of discovery in which the object to be discovered has been constructive of the organ by which it should at length be known. Human personality seeking the divine has been the primitive eye groping for the light and the answering light at length hath made it strong to see."\*

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\*Rev. Charles F. Carter.

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So this significant word "personality" is the key to the deep mystery of the divine self-disclosure; it fuses and welds together that seemingly double process of revelation and discovery. God is able to disclose his innermost self just when and where there is the deepest desire after him, the most persistent search for him, and within the sphere of personality which is simply the designation of self-conscious life, of life maintaining its identity and integrity through all changes; just there God is able to come and speak to that which is most like himself. This is the secret of revelation, the meaning of incarnation. In the holy of holies of a human heart, where all is still and solitary, the eternal God asserts himself and speaks as he does not in the outer courts.

Therefore when we have emphasized, till it will bear emphasis no longer, the fact that God is revealing himself in the external order of life, in all its secular traffic and intercourse, and that he speaks also in the silent life of nature, we are sure to come back at last and declare that "he was not

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in the tempest, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice ;” we keep our profoundest reverence and respect for those revealings that have come to us through the mediation of human hearts who have listened to God in the silence and stillness of their souls.

Is not this the truth that is dimly shadowed forth by that ancient holy of holies? It is not because God is inaccessible and remote, but because there are reserve elements in his being which can disclose themselves only when there is the earnest reaching out after him ; it is when the feeble hands and helpless reach out after God in the darkness that they are lifted up and strengthened. The eye that has groped for light, and tried to see in what light it had, has been met by the answering light, and its power of vision has been strengthened and enlarged. “The pure in heart shall see God.”

Perhaps we shall feel the force of these considerations more fully if we approach them from a different direction ; if we consider the corresponding relations and the similar order of reserve elements as they appear in the life of man ; for we can trace

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in human life an order of relations parallel to these we have already noted.

Our human lives also have their court of the Gentiles, within which move the less intense and permanent fellowships of life. There are the outposts of human fellowships within which we welcome the entire brotherhood of human interests. Over this court might fitly be inscribed the sentiment of the Latin dramatist,—“Nothing that is human is without interest to me.” Here we meet and mingle with every brother man; here the heart of our personal life makes its pulsations felt, but felt as we feel the heart of another in the warm and friendly grasp of the hand; and here is the sphere of those social amenities, those transient relations which have little permanent value, but may still be illumined by the light of kindness and human sympathy.

But within this is the inner court, the shrine of the dearer intimacies, the narrower circle of the friendships which grow out of affinity of nature and of sympathy touching the main purposes of life. Here, also, the holy place, where is the altar of

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home love, the kinship of hearts that are fused in the sacredness of love.

But within even this sacred court is another, the innermost shrine of all, the holy of holies, the place where each of us must go alone if ever we touch the deepest possibilities of our own lives, going to which one must indeed "leave father and mother, husband and wife and child," that in the interior of his own personal life he may touch the heart of God. This is "the flight of the lonely soul to the only God." In man, as in God, there are reserve elements of character and strength. One touches life at many points in the court of the Gentiles, but touches nothing there in the most intimate and interior way. In the narrower circle of friendships he does touch almost the depths of the personal life, but the uttermost reserve is for the only One. A man must go into his closet and shut the door and pray, said Jesus, and the Father who seeth in secret shall reward him. And that great insight of Christ can not be set aside by any objection to prayer from the modern or any other standpoint, for it is an asser-

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tion of a more interior relation than the word prayer can possibly suggest to us ; it simply tells us how the secret springs of life are fed and sustained ; and whatever else may be true, it is without question true forever that the value and strength and beauty of a human life depend upon the reserve elements in its character, those accumulations of wisdom and strength in the quiet hours of solitude which the confusing stream of life in the outer courts can not undermine.

It is out of the consciousness of this necessity of life that the psalmist declared : "My hiding place is in God." It was out of this consciousness that Christ gathered himself, first from the outer circles, and then from the inner circle of his disciples, in his hours of trial and mental conflict. "From the multitudes to the disciples, from the disciples to the chosen three, from the chosen three to the lonely God, within each narrower circumstance revealing what could not be spoken in the wider, and at the point of last resort, unbound from

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all reserve, and melted down as at the focus of an infinite light."

Thus we have traced the working of this strenuous principle from opposite but converging directions; God coming more and more from the external to the interior manifestation; man forced more and more from the general fellowships and the more intimate friendships; the two meeting at that focal point, the interior glowing depths of personality, that holy of holies where the creative insights and revelations have their origin.

And the implications of it move down upon us with swift and tremendous force; for if we are to cherish these reserve elements of character, if we are to grow in the strength of that self-reliance which is at the heart of it reliance upon God, if we are to be established in the pursuit of the true and the good and not blown hither and thither, we must cherish the value of the still hour; we must make a place in our lives for those illuminating solitudes where we shall be able to restore our balance, to get possession of ourselves, to reinstate our ideals, to brush

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away from us those confusions which spring up in the glamor and gossip of the outer courts ; even from the interior and dear relationships we must sometimes flee, remembering that we have allegiance to One upon whose right no other person may transgress ; that all other persuasions must sometimes be set aside that we may hear distinctly the voice that speaks to us in the holiest shrine.

In these clamorous days, which keep us more and more in the outer courts of life, these days in which the old religious habits have lost their hold, it is the more important to cherish the truth which lay within the perishing husk of these customs and habits and bury it deep in our souls, that it may spring up into a new and better harvest than the old. When that new harvest appears, the men out of whose hearts it springs will recognize its likeness to that which was springing, with such abundant and genuine growth, out of the heart of the Hebrew psalmist when he wrote our text, the words that voiced his own deepest spiritual need and its satisfaction,—My hiding place is in God.



## Taking Time To Live

### X

#### TAKING TIME TO LIVE

*Isaiah* xxviii. 16.—He that believeth shall not make haste.

**E**PICURUS, the founder of the school and sect which bore his name, lived about three centuries before the Christian era. He was born about the time that Plato died. From the philosophy of Epicurus has come down to us the familiar maxim,—“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Strange as it may seem, Epicurus and his disciples did not carry out this maxim after the manner of its usual interpretation. We could not exactly call them “epicures.” The mode of life in their almost monastic community was severe and plain. Water and barley bread with a half pint of wine were the ample daily allowance. And once Epicurus wrote to a friend,—“Send me some Scythian cheese, so that if I wish I may fare sumptuously.”

Yet this almost ascetic philosopher was

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the author of the maxim,—“ Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” “ The life that we have,” Epicurus would say, “ is this fleeting and perishing life of to-day ; this life of the body, which is sustained by food and drink ; let us eat and drink then, in order that the body may be built up ; let us make the most of it while it is here ; it is soon cut off and we are gone.” This life of the body Epicurus took with moderation and severity ; eating and drinking did not of necessity mean gluttony and drunkenness. The loaf of barley bread and a half pint of native wine with the occasional delicacy of a bit of Scythian cheese would not carry a man very far on the road to debauchery. It was simply the transientness of life that he would emphasize and the consequent need of making the most of it quickly.

But of course the maxim of Epicurus became the ready formula of those who, admitting the transientness of life, were disposed to make the most of it in another sense. If life is transient, it is not worth making much of ; therefore let us eat, drink

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and be merry ; let us have a gay time and be done with it.

This was in Athens twenty-two or three centuries ago. The cycles of history return in a curious manner. Recently there came to me some copies of a little paper issuing from the "Athens of America." It is a frank avowal of paganism as against, not only Puritanism, but every expression of the spiritual life. It exalts the god Dionysos above all the deities in our pantheon. "The return of paganism is presaged," concludes one contribution, "the cult of the merry Dionysos is spreading."

I do not know with certainty, but I suspect that the writer and editor of this little paper sustains himself on a diet hardly less simple than Epicurus's barley bread and Scythian cheese. Its epicureanism is of the head, heady. It is a passing phase in the vigorous intellectual life of a young man, who has reacted somewhat severely from traditional Puritanism. He interprets his maxims with moderation and sobriety. But there is a note at the end of the first

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number to this effect: "We shall endeavor to make this paper sought for by *bons-vivants*. Sellers of good wines, proprietors of first-class restaurants, and all other proprietors who cater to the *bon-vivant* are invited to notice the advantages of this paper. It is desired to build up a directory that shall be an index to Boston's opportunities for relaxation and pleasure."

Thus history repeats itself. The doctrine of Epicurus, whether interpreted with moderation or with excess, rests upon the fundamental belief that life is this life which we see and feel through sensation, and that when the organs of sensation have perished life has perished with them. Therefore, contrary to the counsel of the prophet, he that believeth this doctrine must make haste. We eat and drink and then,—tomorrow we die.

Let us now pass on from Greek epicureanism to Roman stoicism, the stoicism which was represented by Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. The measuring rod which they applied to life is constructed on an ampler scale. Man must

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live conformably to nature, was the stoic maxim. The haste was not so great; he could take more time to build his life and could build with more deliberation. He must live conformably to nature. Yet the limit is sooner reached than we wish. Haste is not the final word, as with Epicurus, but sadness, resignation and a certain underlying sense of inevitable fate. "There are two things worth remembering," said Marcus Aurelius. "One is that nature treads in a circle and has much the same face through the whole course of eternity, and therefore it signifies not at all whether a man stands gazing here an hundred, or two hundred, or an infinity of years, for all that he gets by it is only to see the same sights so much the oftener. The other hint is that when the longest and shortest-lived persons come to die, their loss is equal; they can but lose the present as being the only thing they have, for that which he has not no man can be truly said to lose."

There are no lives which so well represent the stern and heroic development of

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Roman character as those two lives so like, yet so different, the slave and the emperor, Epictetus and Aurelius. They have spoken words which well deserve to be embodied in the scriptures of humanity. They have a strong and sturdy message to mankind, which a sentimental Christianity has often ignored and repudiated, and as some one wisely declared that he would rather be wrong with Plato than right with Aristotle, so may we, in a like spirit, prefer to be wrong with Marcus Aurelius than right with the weak and sentimentalizing interpreters of the gospel of Christ. There are moods and crises in our lives when the brave words of the stoic slave and the stoic emperor hold our lives in firm assurance, like the anchor thrown out against the storm. The gospel of stoicism is also a braver and more resolute gospel than that of Epicurus ; the background against which it throws our lives is the calmness and quiet of nature. Live conformably to that and you shall have peace.

Yet, after all, and without question, it is the peace of sadness and of resignation. It

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has not seen through this appearance of things and transfigured it. It has not triumphed over the last illusion of life. "If the elements," says Aurelius, "are never the worse for running off into one another, what if they should all change and be dissolved? Why should any man be concerned at the consequence? All this is but nature's method, and nature never does any mischief."

This is the philosophy of stoicism, and when you have sifted it to the bottom its last word is resignation.

Now when we turn to the higher literature of our own time, we quickly perceive that much of it is touched with the spirit of stoicism; the poets are always the chief witnesses of the spiritual temper of the time, and among the greatest of those who voice this renaissance of the stoic mood are such men as Tennyson and Clough and Arnold. They have spoken to us bravely, hopefully, even cheerfully at times, but there is a dominant note of sadness and resignation vibrating through all their song. There are the familiar lines of Arnold on

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Self-Dependence. Let us listen to them once more :

Weary of myself, and sick of asking  
What I am, and what I ought to be,  
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me  
Forwards, forwards, o'er the star-lit sea.

And a look of passionate desire  
O'er the sea and to the stars I send :  
“ Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,  
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end !

“ Ah, once more,” I cried, “ ye stars, ye waters,  
On my heart your mighty charm renew ;  
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,  
Feel my soul becoming vast like you !”

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,  
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,  
In the rustling night-air came the answer :  
“ Wouldst thou *be* as these are ? *Live* as they.

“ Unaffrighted by the silence round them,  
Undistracted by the sights they see,  
These demand not that the things without them  
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

“ And with joy the stars perform their shining,  
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll ;  
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting  
All the fever of some differing soul.



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“Bounded by themselves and unregardful  
In what state God's other works may be,  
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,  
These attain the mighty life you see.”

O air-born voice ! long since, severely clear,  
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear ;  
“Resolve to be thyself ; and know that he  
Who finds himself, loses his misery !”

They are very, very beautiful, but it is a melancholy beauty ; they are very consoling ; many of us have doubtless sought and found their consolation, but after all it is a consolation tinged with sadness ; it brings the peace of resignation, the peace which comes to the caged bird who, tired at last of beating its wings against the bars of its prison, settles down to its fated life. Resolving to be that self which it is compelled to be, it thus at last “loses its misery.”

Now, as between these two, Epicurus and Aurelius, need one hesitate to choose ? Does not the stoic offer us the braver and nobler life ? Does he not offer us more repose, more time to build ? Relatively to the other may we not say in truth,—He that believeth shall not make haste ?

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But stoicism is not the last word. Another round on the ladder of human destiny has been taken. The spirit of Christianity advances upon stoicism even as stoicism advances upon epicureanism; and Christianity most of all teaches us how to live without making haste.

What has Christianity done? I do not ask now what has the Church done; what has theology done; what have the sects done? For underneath all the visible and organic movement is a spirit never exhausted, never quite interpreted to the full. What has Christianity, in the depth and fullness which that term shall one day convey to us,—what has it done for us?

This it has done: it has raised life to the *n*th power; it has brought man into the presence of the infinite and taught him to stand there, not appalled and crushed, but lifted up and strengthened; it has taught him to live in the presence of the infinite and to live there with eagerness and joy.

There are three facts which have been fundamental in life,—three ideas which

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have haunted man and would not let him go; with which he has had to wrestle until the breaking of the day. These three are God, the soul and immortality. Man has tried to grasp them up and unify them and see them under one principle. Christianity has taught him how. It has given him an infinite Father, the essence of whose life is love; it has given him an infinite soul, a soul boundless in its aspirations and desires; and it has given him an infinite time in which to work out the problems of his life.

These are the three things which have always been haunting man and they are all infinite, they are all eternal and they belong together; they show man, as he has never been shown before, that he has time to build his life in a splendid and enduring way.

In the light of this we get a new interpretation for the words of Paul, —“ If the dead are not raised let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” It is as if he said,— The choice is between looking at life as finite and looking at it as infinite. If it

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is finite, why should you not strive for all the happiness and satisfaction you can get out of it; why should you not push other men aside in the struggle, so that you may have more for yourself? Why be considerate and unselfish? That implies a larger scale of life than you admit. But if life is infinite, then there is time to build; you are really only laying the foundations now, and you must lay them deep and build them strong. Think of what is to go above them. You can not afford to build hastily with hay, wood and stubble; you must use gold, silver and precious stones. Other things count now beside happiness, satisfaction, and the quaffing of life's cup of joy. Justice and truth count; fraternity and fellowship count; you can not push your brother out of the way, for he too is infinite, he goes on with you; he is part of the universe; he is included in your own destiny.

In this thought of life as infinite, there are some other things that grow clearer. We begin to see light on the incompletions of life. It seems at times so incongruous and bewildering that just as we get ready,

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as we think, to live well for ourselves, we must begin to live for the life of others. We come up out of the unconscious happy life of childhood; we get our preparation for life; we begin to feel how beautiful and worthy life is going to be; and by and by we find a new home, our own home, and the cup of life is full to its brim. The home is the supreme ideal and the supreme happiness of human life; and then, ere long, we learn that by God's appointment it is also life's supreme anxiety and care. We have struggled for life, and then begins the holy and anxious struggle for the life of others. Does it sometimes seem like a mockery, as if life were like the wine-cup which we are permitted to put to our lips only to pass it on down to the next generation? Does it seem that man is fated to believe that life is a splendid and worthy possession only to find that it is not his own life that he is to possess and enjoy, but the lives of those who come after him which he is to think about and care for? If that is the endless labor of life, where does life itself appear as a reality and a possession?

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Is it not forever a phantom, fleeing from us just as we grasp it?

You must say "yes," if you agree with Epicurus that life is this transient thing which you have in your own hand; you must use it and make haste, for it will soon be gone and it is yours, your own solitary individual possession.

But if life is infinite, then it is infinite not only in duration but in compass, in what it includes; every family on earth and in heaven must be included in the calculation; and the great cloud of witnesses must be reckoned as interested participants in our earthly race.

Then may you build a home and take time to build your life into it, cementing it with cares and anxieties and tears and heartaches, for they too are a part of this infinite possession of life.

There is also another mystery of life which here grows clear. On any other interpretation of life than this the great sacrifices of history are contradictions and illusions. On any other ground I do not know what to say about Socrates going to his

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death; it seems like an awful waste of a splendid life. On any other ground I do not know how to interpret Gethsemane and Calvary. The cross seems to be the symbol of misjudged and misguided zeal. But if we can raise all these terms of life to the *n*th power, if we can think of it all as part of the eternal and infinite process, then we begin to understand what Jesus meant when he said,—“If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me.” The cross begins to symbolize, not the utter waste of life, but the gathering up of its fragments under the law of love.

Then, last of all, do we not begin to understand the great and solemn mystery of death which so invades our life and cuts short the thread, interrupts the tasks but just begun, makes the hand stiff and cold that was just beginning to create; stops the active mind that was so eager to explore? It all seems so utterly perplexing and confusing; it all is so, unless we learn to think of life as infinite, and then we can begin to say—

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“Our times are in His hand  
Who saith,—‘A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all,  
nor be afraid!’

\* \* \* \* \*

My times be in thy hand!  
Perfect the cup as planned!  
Let age approve of youth and death complete  
the same!”

There are two pictures now before my mind which shall sum up and complete the thought.

I see here a great expanse of land, which to-morrow the government is to throw open by free gift to the first comers. Here, gathering and crowding up to the very border line, is a motley crowd of place-hunters and land-seekers, waiting impatiently for the signal on the morrow. Men and women, children, horses and cattle are in the melee; they trample upon each other; they push each other aside; they maneuver for the positions nearest the front; and then, at last, when the morrow comes and the signal is given,—what a scattering here and there! Stakes are driven down, tents are raised, rude houses spring up like mushrooms and



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in a few days there is the semblance of a town and the rudiments of corporate life. Those who heard the summons and believed, in very truth did make haste.

But I see another picture. The order goes forth one day that a great cathedral is to be built; the plans have been maturing for years; at last the plans are submitted to the builders; the foundations begin to be laid. Down, down underneath the earth they go, solid and enduring as the hills from which a little while ago they came. Months go by and still the foundations have hardly reached the surface. And then walls, buttresses, roofs, towers, domes, pinnacles, groups of marvelous sculpture, take their place from time to time; one generation succeeds another; the hand that labored lovingly lingers and fails; builders pass away and other builders take their place. Centuries after the foundations are begun, the great structure, symbol of the eternal and the infinite, is at last complete. The builders who received the order and who believed the message did not make haste.

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Take these two pictures and tell me,—  
which of them would you have to be the  
symbol of your life ?

# The Inexhaustible Christ

## XI

### THE INEXHAUSTIBLE CHRIST

*John* iv. 11—The woman saith unto him : Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.

JACOB'S well and the errand of a woman thither from the town near by became the occasion of those deep and suggestive glimpses into life to which we are always returning to find some meaning which we had missed or misunderstood before. The woman of Samaria, in her attitude toward the revelations of Jesus, was not unlike many another. Her mind was puzzled and bewildered, struggling out of its crude and shallow conceptions of life toward some deeper thought which it but feebly grasped.

It is what we always see where one who is dwelling upon a low plane of life tries to understand another whose plane of life is higher. The means of communication from one mind to the other are difficult and laborious. Words symbolize dif-

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ferent ideas to each. Language, perfectly simple and intelligible in itself, suffers transmutation and debasement from the alloy of a mind which has habitually dwelt among poor and unworthy conceptions of life.

This woman of Samaria, hitherto weak, frivolous and thoughtless, must therefore falter and stumble over the threshold of utterances which were the doorway to thoughts of life of which she dwelt all unaware. And she is not unlike many another, for it is the common experience to be struggling up out of crude and shallow conceptions of life.

The words of Jesus mean something to many people in the world, but they mean many differing things. His ideas are clothed in common language, but in the process of becoming our own convictions and beliefs they are alloyed with whatever conceptions of life we already have. So the interpretation of Christ is a constant process of refining and purifying our own ideas of their dross. It is not strange that this woman took Jesus literally when he spoke in exalted and suggestive metaphors, for

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it is the fate which he has been meeting at men's hands from then till now, the fate of having the interpretation of the dead and formal letter put upon what was quickening spirit, and alas ! also to be taken with the leniency of metaphor when he spoke with direct and burning literalness.

But there is one expression of this Samaritan woman which, in its heedless misinterpretation of Christ, stumbled into a pertinence of which she was not aware. Christ had spoken of the water which he was able to give, and in unfeigned surprise the woman replied,—“ Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; whence, then, hast thou that living water? ” Jesus was speaking of himself. She supposed him to be speaking of that well where they sat, or of some other of which she knew not; but with reference to what she supposed him to mean she said,—“ The well is deep.” And as a description of what Christ had in mind, can you think of any expression in all the world more true and apt, “ The well is deep ”?

It is an unconscious and unintended trib-

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ute to the depth and inexhaustibleness of Jesus ; and it is this of which I wish to speak to-day.

There is nothing which becomes more apparent to us as we become acquainted with the intellectual and moral history of mankind than the transientness of human leaderships. The masters of the world become outgrown and superseded. We come at length to venerate their memories, to record their words and their deeds, but we cease to follow them. We have exhausted them, simply because that conception of life which their own personalities summed up and grasped has yielded to the conceptions of personalities fuller-orbed.

Take the history of philosophy. Recall the names of Plato and Aristotle among the Greeks. We have recorded them among the constellations of philosophical thought. But neither Plato nor Aristotle is master of human thinking to-day. Their spirit abides. Something of their thought is final, but the mastership of philosophy has passed to other hands.

Or come over into the external world

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and recall the masters in science. What volumes of outgrown and exhausted theories! What lists of masters whose word is authority no more! Even the names, which easily spring to the lips when one would mention the leaders, are names of men who were great in their time, distinguished as pioneers, but whose special contributions are valuable to-day only as history.

Then the masters in the world of religious thought,—how they also lose their master-ship because they see in part and must yield to others who see more deeply and clearly!

“Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be:  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

Who is master in the world of religion to-day? Is it Augustine? Is it Luther? Is it Calvin, or Edwards or Channing? Masters they have been, all of them; mighty men in the spiritual Israel; but they “saw in part,” and to the one who calls any man on

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earth his master must come the inevitable fate of sharing with him the imperfect vision, the relative and inadequate result.

So in this realm of our life and in that, the masters are exhausted and surpassed. Men have found at last some way to reach even the deepest wells of their thought and have there quenched their thirst.

But the thirst of man's mind and heart is infinite. Is there any where in all our life a well so deep that it can not be drained? Is there any master who can speak with imperishable authority and with a wisdom which is exhaustless?

Let us think a moment and try to see in what such depth and inexhaustibleness must consist. Will it be in the facts which one has mastered and is able to communicate to other minds? Will it be the truth of teaching, the impartation of knowledge?

When we look to see who have been the masters of mankind, we are easily convinced that one element of that mastership has been the power to teach, to communicate ideas, to reveal fact and truth which were not known before. Therefore the



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final and inexhaustible master, if such there were, would be a teacher. He would be able to impart to men truths and principles bearing upon their life. Such a teacher must be able to reveal those truths which are universal and perpetual in their bearing. He must speak to that which is eternal in the human heart. This will be the condition of his inexhaustibleness as a teacher of men.

Now in the brief accounts left to us of the life of Christ there is a considerable record of his teaching. How shall we describe it? It was not after the form and manner of the schools. It was not modeled after the rabbinical teaching of the Jews nor the philosophical teaching of the Greeks. It does not add very much to our positive information about the world or our own natures. But it addresses man's capacity for what is universal, belonging to no special place; for what is permanent, belonging to no special time; for what is human, belonging to no special race or condition. The constant impression which we get from the teaching of Jesus is that

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it belongs to no place, to no age, to no race, because it belongs to all. And it is all this without losing that directness and enthusiasm which are necessary to make any teaching effective.

Think for a moment of the difference in one or two particulars between Christ's attitude to life and the attitude of others which seems to be like it. Take it in the matter of one's relation to country. Patriotism is something which is deep-rooted in human life. The Latin poet told us that to die for one's country is sweet; and men have always believed it. Every child of whatever land comes to think that the flag of his land is the most beautiful of all. We have all felt the depth and value of the sentiment for native land in the pathetic story of "the man without a country."

But Christ was not a patriot in the sense which we naturally attach to the word; nor does his teaching justify a patriotism of any narrow and exclusive sort, the patriotism which fails to see the brother in the foreigner, which justifies a national policy built upon the assumption that there is no

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obligation toward the dweller in another land except to make the most possible out of him. The world was Christ's country and every man in it a fellow-citizen, and he meant it in no weak and meaningless sense, but in a sense rich and real.

Yet after all there is something so different in this universal attitude of Christ from that attitude which we sometimes see in the men who are universal in a merely negative way ; who have no love for native land, no enthusiastic patriotism of the limited kind, but who have none of the enthusiasm for humanity, the deep and persistent human love which takes mankind up into the citizenship of a new and better country. Christ's teaching was in the very face of all those religious and political sentiments of his time which gathered in such a proud and exclusive way about the chosen race. Yet no Jewish patriot of the intensest and most intolerant type could have wept over Jerusalem as Jesus wept. Think what a patriotism it was ! A patriotism which could see the universal relation through the local, which could keep the sense of a

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world-brotherhood without losing intensity or interest in the smaller brotherhood. How immediate its bearing upon us all! How full of lessons to our statesmen and leaders! How it saves us from an indifference to the progress of righteousness in national affairs and from all blind and intolerant sectionalism!

Then in Christ's teaching respecting the family, we have another illustration of its permanence and absoluteness. Christ's attitude to the family was like his attitude to country. He saw through the family idea and relation to that which it signified. "Who is my mother, and my brother, and sister," he said. "The one who doeth the will of God is my mother, and brother, and sister?" Does that seem like indifference to the tie which to us is so dear and sacred? Recall then in how many of his teachings Christ blessed the home, the family, the child-life blossoming from it, and how, even in the pains of death, he bethought him of his mother and besought for her a home with the beloved disciple.

At this point, also, Christ's teaching

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touches what is universal and permanent without losing what is real and immediate. He blesses the home, but saves it from its selfishness and exclusiveness. If he would regard with scorn and pity and sorrow, the infidelity, the shattered loves, the broken vows, the disregard of this most sacred relation, would he not also look with similar feelings upon the selfish isolation in which so many homes are kept? Is it not once more the evidence of an inexhaustible teacher that his precepts bear constantly upon life with such force and vitality?

Therefore, if we look only at the teaching of Jesus, we discover that "the well is deep." Christ's conception of life was an inexhaustible conception, and his teaching was the constant expression of that conception of life.

But we must not speak longer of the teaching of Jesus. For his teaching was not the most significant element of his life; it is never by itself the most significant element of any one's life. For teaching is one's self externalized. It is one's self gone out into a medium of utterance which

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has an element of imperfection and which we never can be quite sure will adequately interpret the thought which lay in the mind. Words are material things, and when thought incarnates itself in language, by as much as it is deep and high thought, it empties itself somewhat of its glory and becomes poor in order that we, through it, may become rich.

So one never quite gets to the fountain head of the life till he gets behind the teaching, behind the external deed, to the personality itself. The man is not reached in the citadel of his life till we get beyond what he says and what he does to what he is. Behind every expression of the life is the life itself. Christ said of himself, with a recognition of this central fact of personality, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

It is here again that we discover the truth of the woman's words,—“the well is deep.” Here, too, we get the intimation of that living water which Christ said he could give.

The truth of personality is deeper than

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all other truths. The constant impression which we are getting from a life is the true measure of that life. We know what a person thinks, what he would say, when we know what he is. The expression of the life, the attempt to communicate, is but the opening of so many doors into life itself. I need not ask for an expression of opinion from the friend whom I know deeply and intimately. My knowledge of him as he is becomes the clew to what he will say and do. In the highest sense the man must himself be the embodiment of all that he knows, and feels, and does. All this finds its highest exemplification in Jesus. Recall what he said to his disciples,—“I and my Father are one.” Recall what he said even more specifically to Philip,—“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

This illustrates the difference between truth of teaching and truth of personality. Christ was not a teacher of theism. He gave his disciples no formal definitions. The references to God in his teaching were all figurative and drawn

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from the common relations of life, and as teaching they have a priceless value. Yet the deep and imperishable revelation of God which we get from Christ comes to us not so much through his teaching as through his personality. His thought of God was breathed out through his life, through the conscious identification of himself with the divine life. The theological discussion over the nature of Christ has largely, on both sides, missed this central truth of the necessity of an embodiment in one's inmost, personal self of a deep and vital truth, before he can become a communicator of that truth.

We can find no analogies of a truth so great as this without seeming to belittle the fact which we would illuminate. But a suggestion of it we may get from other phases of life.

Take the music of Beethoven, so great and profound. It is music which makes its appeal to deep and strong natures. All really deep souls, to whom music makes any appeal, turn lovingly to this great master. And they love him because he speaks



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through his language of tone to what is kindred in them. One must become identified with the spirit and life of Beethoven, must in a sense become Beethoven, to know and understand, and love that which is the expression of himself.

This is the explanation of our relative and changing tastes in a thousand other things. The sweet and simple songs of Longfellow are among the blessed memories of our childhood. They appeal even to the immature period of life. There is an identification of our natures with that part of the poet's nature which appealed to us and revealed itself to us. Then at length in our later life we are interested and absorbed in other poets, who had no charm for us before, because their natures and their experience were too profound for us to grasp; we were unable to become one with them.

This is but a feeble hint of the truth we would convey that the knowledge which Jesus gave us of God, of human life, of human duty, was what he gave us in his own personality. If a man knew Jesus deeply

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and truly, he would thereby know what Jesus knew of God and of man. The secret of his life he could impart in no other way, just as you can impart the secret of your own life in no other way. Therefore he said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Is not this the pledge and evidence of the inexhaustibleness of Jesus? If he had given us definitions of God which grew out of the philosophy of his age and were formulated in its logic; if he had defined life and society after the traditions and types prevailing around him, would not his teaching have been affected by what was transient and partial in those forms? But if he has made his revelation through his personality, then we know God as Christ knew him; we know man as Christ knew him; we know human society as Christ knew it, when we know Christ himself; when we have such affiliation with his spirit, such companionship with his thought, as shall bring us within the atmosphere and influence of his life. And we learn that the water which he gave men to drink was to

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be in them also a well of water springing up into eternal life.

Life is full of many perplexities and bewilderments. We talk about the theistic problem and the social problem. We feel the fog in our minds and the frost upon our hearts. We find it difficult to believe in God, difficult to live hopefully and bravely in the world. We seek wisdom from many masters, and they leave the final word unsaid, the deepest hunger of the heart unsatisfied.

What was the secret of Jesus? How can he communicate to us his idea of God, of man, of ourselves, of the future? How can he shed light upon all the dark and painful riddle of our life?

By what he said and did? Yes. But most of all, by what he was, which is incommunicable in even words or deeds. He knew God by that of God which was in him; he knew man by what of man was in him. Neither by theology nor by social science can he impart to us that which was deepest and most real and most sure to him. But the living water which

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he drank he can communicate by making it a well of water in our lives, springing up into eternal life. And we shall know as he knew.

The spirit and the mind of Christ have as yet but a limited and feeble sway over human life. Other things have intervened to stay their influence. Men have had greater faith in their own verbal and symbolic interpretations of Christ than in his spirit. But the well is deep. Have we anything to draw with? Surely we have the capacity of our own hearts; we have our sense of thirst. Let us make the venture of faith. "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou only hast the words of eternal life."

# Finding Life

## XII

### FINDING LIFE

A BACCALAUREATE DISCOURSE AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY, 1897

*Luke xv. 17.*—But when he came to himself, he said: I will arise and go to my father.

THE parable of the prodigal son appeals so deeply to the heart, so touches our sense of pity and compassion, that we are likely to overlook the breadth and inclusiveness of its teaching. We have so connected it with a definite aspect of human sin and waywardness that we miss of seeing how Jesus expresses in it his whole comprehensive doctrine of life. But this doctrine of Jesus was at once so simple and so inclusive that it almost inevitably expressed itself in everything he said.

What Mr. Arnold called the “secret of Jesus” is a secret which readily discloses itself. It did not reside in the singularity

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of his teaching ; for again and again has it been shown that the maxims and precepts of Jesus are not only paralleled in the religious lore of other nations, but that for substance they are found in the sacred books of his own people. Nor did his secret dwell in any magic or miracle-working power ; for he insisted with emphasis that it was an evil generation which sought after a sign ; and it is through a singular misunderstanding of Jesus that subsequent apologists for his faith have laid primary stress upon miracles. That is to emphasize the very thing from which Jesus was always seeking to withdraw emphasis. It is to fetter the human spirit with those very bonds of sensuousness and materialism which he was trying with all his might to break.

No, the secret of Jesus is not within the sphere of knowledge nor within the sphere of power. The perpetual power of his revelation is in the absoluteness with which he brought together the life of man and the life of God. The pedestal upon which Jesus stands, and will continue to stand

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throughout human history, is the pedestal of religion; and if, as Paul thought, the name of Christ is written above every other name, it is because the religious need, with its satisfaction, is the deepest and the most permanent of human needs.

Now this most pathetic and appealing of Christ's parables comes back to this full and resonant key-note. The secret of Jesus reveals itself even when he talks about this common every-day occurrence and tells the story of a wayward lad who goes away from his father's house and has so pitiable an experience. He declares the one and only fundamental thing he has to say about any human life when he says, in the course of the story,—“He came to himself,”—and instantly adds, that when he came to himself, as a part of his coming to himself and the very explanation of it, he also said,—“I will arise and go to my father.”

No man can at any time, or in any way, actually come to himself without finding also the inward compulsion and desire to “go to his father.” No man finds his own life, his own genuine and ultimate life,

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without finding it in the midst of those relations and in contact with that whole of life, that underlying and eternal unity of being, to which man reverently gives the name of God. This conviction is the most fundamental conviction in Christ's thought ; it is his contribution to humanity ; it is the key-note of his gospel.

Let us observe it for a moment as it interprets itself in this parable. We are introduced to the characters in the story at the point when the younger of two brothers, resolving to see something of life, asks for his share of the father's estate and goes off by himself. For one romantic, intoxicating moment he seemed to have found himself. He was evidently saying to himself,—“ I am my own master ; I know what I want, and I am going to have it ; I am going to enjoy this rich and glorious life to the full. I will ask my father for what is mine and I will see the world.”

How fitly this describes that moment of self-assertion which comes to so many, that wilful, imperious assertion of one's self, that awakening to one's sense of individual



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rights and freedom which seems so much like the real discovery of self, but alas is so very often just its opposite! What can be better than to assert one's independence? What can be more glorious than to declare one's ownership of his own life and his right to do with it as he will? It is just this imperious and boastful selfhood for which the younger son stands at the moment of his leaving home.

And the older son appears there in the story as an appropriate foil. Many have tried to exalt him as the obedient and dutiful son, but he does not easily take on the luster of so great praise; he is not an interesting character; his virtues are negative. He appears not to have noticed any negligence on his father's part until his own anger over the merry-making connected with his wayward brother's return reminds him of it. He seems to have plodded on in a matter-of-fact, indifferent sort of way, never to have had his brother's experience of wilful and wayward self-assertion and, so far as the story goes, never to have found the larger and truer discovery of

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himself. It seems to show that a man may miss of discovering his true self, not only by the assertion of a false self, but by not awakening to any real sense of his selfhood. He may lose himself by going on the wrong road ; he may also lose himself by not going on any road.

But the interest of the story continues with the younger son. When he asked for his share of the goods and went off to see the world he thought he had “come to himself.” He saw himself, his freedom and his happiness in that triumphant, proud, self-assertive moment, the self that cut loose without regret from home and family and the sacred associations of the past.

There is dramatic emphasis, therefore, in the quiet words with which Christ opened the final act in this young man’s career,—“when he had come to himself.” So, then, after all it was not himself to which he had come in that earlier experience. It was not his actual and true life which he found when he gathered up his possessions and went off on his tour of pleasures. But it is the vision of his true self that dawns upon

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him by and by, and that which stands out most clearly in the new vision, that which makes his heart throb with mingled hope and fear, is the memory of his father's house. The finding of the true self takes him straight back to the bonds and the fellowships which he had broken. The finding of the true self re-establishes relations and duties; ties up the ends of life that had been sundered. Finding one's self is finding, not an isolated, assertive, independent self, but a self whose life must co-operate with other selves. It is finding sonship and fatherhood. It is retracing all that mistaken, blundering way, and finding the father with his welcome and the household with its great joy, with its festal laughter and music.

This is the fundamental doctrine of Jesus. It is the "C major" of all his music, and he can not tell the simple story of a wayward boy, a story which still and forever pleads through its compassionate tones with all who are lost, as this boy was lost, without at the same time giving utterance to a doctrine of life which is as high as the

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heavens and as deep as the sea. To find one's self is to find that self which, instead of isolating, unites in a wealth of interests and relations and it is all expressed in that simple and tender word, "I will arise and go to my father."

Now, this is so fundamental and inclusive that I would have you view it apart from its relations to this special case of the parable where it finds only one of many applications. Let us dwell upon its application to the finding of life in wider relations.

First, it has an obvious bearing upon man's intellectual life. In reasserting the two great commandments of the law, Christ declared that man should love God not only with his heart and his whole soul, but with his mind. There is something very striking in this latter requirement, when you take it away from the rest and look at it by itself—loving God with the mind. We do not often think of love as in any real sense a function of the intellect. We think of the mind as solely concerned with the truth and as having no more to do with love and sympathy

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than has the judge on the bench in his capacity as judge. To see clearly, to judge impartially, to pronounce according to the fact is the duty of the intellect of man. Is there, then, any genuine sense in which we may "love God with the mind?"

We get some light upon this question when we consider the very great difference there is between the spirit of modern criticism and the spirit which prevailed a century or less ago. We almost need a new word to express this change of attitude. The critics of the old-time reviews were captious, bitter and violent. Their main object was to attack, to vilify, to destroy. Modern criticism, the criticism which is fast becoming the criterion of all legitimate use of the mind in this judicial capacity, is sympathetic and appreciative. Its object is to understand and to interpret what an author or an artist has done. It seeks not to condemn or approve from the standpoint of the critic, but to determine whether the man who is criticised has expressed himself with sincerity and strength. In our modern method of literary and esthetic criticism,

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the method of appreciation, as contrasted with the former method of denunciation, we get a glimpse then of what it is for the intellect to work with sympathy and love. The mind loves when it sees things in the large way and tries to understand, not from its own exclusive standpoint, but from that of the other man.

The old form of criticism was guilty of dividing the inheritance and going off into a far country. The better type is that which has come to itself and recognized its longing for that from which it had been too long sundered.

Now we may let the activity of the mind within this sphere, which we measurably understand, illustrate its activity within the larger domain of the universe, that activity which we may rightly call the mind's love of God.

Humanity dwelt so long in the heavy, stifling air of superstition, that it is little wonder the eager intellect of man at last broke away from its restraints, asked for a division of the estate and went off by itself. It is little wonder that this intellect has in

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its sense of freedom found undisciplined and even riotous expressions of its energy. One can not help admiring the splendid audacity of the astronomer who declared that he had swept the heavens with his telescope and had found no God,—but the mental attitude of mankind is already so modified, that this triumphant doubter appears in an almost ludicrous light. We feel like saying to him,—Why should you expect to find him in the heavens or use your telescope to aid you, unless he were first in the eyes with which you looked and in the soul whose organs of vision the eyes are?

“No man can see more in a picture than he brings to it from himself,” Ruskin declared. Likewise no man finds more in the universe than he brings to it from his own life. No telescope can reveal God in the starry heavens; he is not there. No microscope can detect him in the ultimate cell; he is not there. “All we have power to see is the straight staff bent in the pool.” But ah! if we could see and hear! If this divine vision were first here within us,—

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then in very truth would not he be in all this vision of sea and hill and plain, of flaming star and invisible cell?

So through all this era of science, since the intellect of man broke away from superstition, there has been splendid achievement, but we need not hesitate to say that in this period the intellect of man has often worked in an isolated and haughty fashion; it has compelled a division of the estate and gone away. It has helped to widen this chasm between the twofold life which ought never to have been twofold.

But he is blind, indeed, who does not see how this side of life is coming to its truer self and beginning to think of the forgotten home and the father of the spirit. The intellect of man is beginning to act in the sympathetic and constructive way.

One of the leading scientists of this country, a man both fearless and reverent, has recently said what would not sound novel coming from an apologist of the traditional ideas but certainly has added weight coming from so unprejudiced a source.

He relates that "a pulpit orator once



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conspicuous renounced his religion, because he would no longer serve a God who would do nothing for him. Because his prayers would not make him rich, or powerful, or famous, he would cease to pray. He became a lawyer, and entered the service of Tammany Hall, who could and doubtless did 'do something for him.' But this is to miss the whole purpose of prayer. Because it has no money value, because it will not bring rain or save a crop, or fill a church, or sell a drove of hogs, has it no purpose to you? Your life is more than crops or churches. The true purpose of prayer is to help us do God's will; to make us happy because we do good deeds; to make us strong because our prayers are God's purposes. Prayer is the expression of what may be called the human reaction;—and under the law of human reaction, cruelty gives place to love, intolerance and bigotry to sweetness and light, the sword to the dynamo and dogma to science."

In such an attitude as this, and it is an increasing attitude, we discover a great reality of meaning in the mind's love

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of God. We may dare believe that some day, when the intellect of the race has fully come to itself, the self of which it is conscious will be, not the isolated self which asks for the division of the estate, but the related self which, with full and deep desire, cries out, "I will arise and go to my father." That day will be the day of man's greatest achievement and likewise of his greatest emancipation; for the liberty of a fugitive slave can never be like the liberty of the son who dwells in the house of the father.

But man is coming to himself in other realms than the intellectual. He is coming to a sense of larger selfhood in the organic world of society. "In the old days," a recent writer has said, "individuality, the right and duty of a human being to live his own life, to think his own unhampered thought, to come to his own honest conclusion and to speak it out, had little place in politics or religion. Even the philosophers, into whose equations it entered, did not treat it as a universal vital fact. They looked at it as idle people looked at the steam which came out of the spout of

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the kettle on the fire, and never dreamed what it could do. But in the sixteenth century, when powder and printing and Columbus and Copernicus were added together, individuality appeared at the foot of the column."

These recent centuries have seen the reign of this individual ; have seen the great revolutions ; have seen man with his new consciousness of power and liberty demanding his own, claiming his full share of the inheritance and giving almost prodigal expression to his life. There has been throughout an older son abiding at home ; conservators of ancient customs in state and church, who seem not to have dreamed that anything was going on, or that the household was divided, or at most waiting for the prodigal brother to return and accept obediently the ancient conditions, as when the holy pontiff at Rome now and then holds out a gracious hand to his rebellious brethren.

But in the social world this kind of return is forever impossible. The assertion of the individual has been too significant ;

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the revolutionary influences have been too radical; the emancipation has been too complete. The lines of progress have been extended by the individual; the triumphant achievements of the recent centuries are the result of this new and vigorous assertion of the individual man.

But already are there indications of a new expression of the "human reaction" upon the world, a reaction which is disclosing the fact that individualism, with all its truth and all its triumphs, is not the final condition. The man who is coming to himself is the social man, and in the heart of the social man is the imperishable hunger for the father's house. The social man is learning that it is impossible for man to live alone; that he neither liveth nor dieth to himself. He is discovering, with surprising rapidity, that the isolated life is not only false but that it is impossible; for this man who asserted himself with such independence, who launched himself upon the crest of the revolutionary wave with his proud boast of equality and freedom and rights, is learning that he is not isolated, but

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related ; he is discovering that his best and dearest life is a life which holds him within a vast network of human interests. Take the individual man away from his relation to the family and the state, away from the associations of friendship, of toil and of faith, what would he be? Would any man be left to boast and prate? The era of individualism is emerging into the era of personalism, and it is the very essence of personality to know and recognize its relations. The man, wakening to consciousness of true personality, at once declares, "I will arise and go to my father's house."

What the ultimate social form is to be, no man is yet wise enough to predict. And who need care? One may well cherish the splendid unconcern of Jesus regarding details, for he said, "The day and the hour no man knoweth, but only the Father." The one thing to be sure about is that the kingdom of God, the true life of man, will ultimately prevail ; and who can doubt that this dawning consciousness of the social self is higher and truer than that of the former individual self ; that we see in it one

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more indication that man is surely awakening to himself?

Finally, I would affirm the same truth in the realm of the ethical life. Man is awakening to the conviction that the moral life and the religious life are inseparably united. Man is destined to know that he can not order his conduct aright without arising and going to the house of his father.

The connection between morality and religion is a much vexed question, perhaps unnecessarily sophisticated.

Can man live a moral life and not be religious? If by that, one wants to know whether a man can be honest and truthful, can display justice, friendship, affection, integrity, without acceptance of the forms of religion, it is hardly necessary to raise the question. The world is too full of people who are daily demonstrations of its truth to make it worth while lingering over it.

Moreover, if by religion one means the maintenance of historic forms of belief and of historic symbols, there is a great variety of reasons why men of irreproachable

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character are not religious. If, too, by belief in God one means to specify the lines of approach to speculative definitions of the Divine Being, there are many reasons of strength and urgency why multitudes who feel the spirit of the age do not believe, or suspect they do not believe, in God.

But the whole question needs raising to a higher plane, demands consideration in a clearer light.

What is morality? It is conduct and character determined by the laws and facts of the world in which man lives his moral life. And religion, what is that? Is it not based, as Benjamin Stillman the great chemist said, upon the recognition of "a power in the universe good enough to make truth-telling safe and strong enough to make truth-telling effective" ?

It is certain that man's moral life must have for its foundation the permanent reality of things ; it must rest upon ultimate and adequate fact ; for it has been well said that "man can not accept as the standard of his life an ideal which is not in absolute harmony with the ultimate principle of the

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universe ; nor even if he did, could his effort to realize it be anything but the struggle with an alien power too strong for him, a struggle as futile as the attempt of the Teutonic giant of the northern Saga to lift the deep-seated earth from its foundations."

Morality is character based upon things as they are ; and religion, can we say anything truer about it than this,—it is the recognition of "the God of things as they are."

In recent years there has arisen a group of associations known as ethical culture societies. They originated in a need which the church was not supplying. The church had crystallized into dogma or vaporized into sentiment and was in danger of ignoring the moral life, which is at the very basis of things. Therefore the ethical culture movement is a standing testimony to the partial apostasy of the church, which by right ought to be the one adequate universal human society.

The value of these associations lies in the fact that they have helped to recover



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the interests of the moral life, to re-establish the claims of character. When they declare themselves to be a substitute for religion, they merely show how easy it is to take a part for the whole.

The aim of life may be summed up in this,—the development of character in accordance with standards and ideals which correspond to the whole fact, the entire and permanent reality of things; and that, I submit, is to establish it upon the religious basis. “God made us for himself, and our hearts are unquiet until they find their rest in him.”

Here, then, in these three realms, the intellectual, the social and the ethical, are the evidences that humanity is coming to the discovery of its own larger and worthier life; it is in each instance a discovery which discloses new relations and awakens the desire in man to seek the source of those relations, to find the unifying principle of life, to find his peace. The ultimate answer to man's persistent questionings is the religious answer.

Something in man's life is left unsatisfied

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until he gets an answer to the haunting question,—“When shall I come and appear before God?”

And that answer must be given not in terms of the intellect alone, nor in terms of the emotion, but in terms of character and life, the answer which Jesus found when he declared,—“It is my meat to do the will of my father.”

It is not in the interest of pietism, but in the interest of full-orbed character and of fruitful and abundant life, that I would have you believe and see with growing clearness that when humanity comes fully to itself it will certainly and inevitably say to its own heart,—“I will arise and go to my father.”

And now, young men and women of the graduating class, let me say the last word to-day directly and especially to yourselves. You stand here to-day at the meeting-point between the university and the world; you are at the point of discovering how far the university has fitted you for the larger interests of actual life; you are at the point where you shall begin to demonstrate to

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society whether the university has helped you to the finding of life.

Every age has its own ideals, and the university has, in every age, been a powerful instrument in the preservation and maintenance of those ideals. We must acknowledge with gratitude that the closing years of this century in our country are witnessing a development of the university which is making it a more adequate expression of the democratic ideal. The university is throwing off the scholastic robes and putting on the garments of the athlete. It is more and more disabusing itself of the charge of furnishing a culture which is special, exclusive, aristocratic and, of necessity, adapted to the few, the men of leisure, the men of wealth, the men of the so-called learned professions.

The university is becoming not only universal in the scope of its material, but in the constituencies which it draws to itself. It is becoming like the gospel which Paul proclaimed, which recognized neither bond nor free, Jew nor Gentile, male nor female. The university is happily leaving the cloister

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and coming out into the open. The admission of women into almost every college in this country, the spread of the university extension principle, the multiplication of those courses which deal with the arts of life capable of extending human happiness and welfare—all these are illustrations of what we may call the democratizing of the university.

You are to be twentieth century men, and I congratulate you upon the promise of its dawn. Had you lived at the close of the eighteenth century, you would have heard the calls to freedom resounding in your ears ; you would have heard the appeals to enlist in the service of human rights and liberties ; you would have felt the exhilaration of revolution stirring in your veins, and, perhaps, you would have responded to the sentiment of Samuel Adams, who, when he heard the firing of the first shots of the Revolution on Lexington Common, said to his friend Hancock,—“ What a glorious day is this ! ”

But if you respond to the possibilities of our own closing century, you may say with

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better right than Samuel Adams said,—  
“What a glorious day is this!”

I say, if you respond to the possibilities of our own time, for if we look superficially, there is perhaps much to depress and occasion doubt of the immediate future. The degrading influences of our time are very intimately connected with these possibilities for highest good. We are having, as never before, a return to actual life; the university is, as never before, serving the actual life, and this, of necessity, is causing a tremendous emphasis to be placed upon the external and material conditions of life. And herein is both the peril and the promise of the new century.

A well-known journalist has recently uttered a truth important enough to cause a halt for a moment at any rate. He declares that “the century opened with three million Americans who loved liberty and is about to close with seventy-five million who love money.”

If this is the true description of our age, is it not a record of infamy and recreancy to high ideals which must make us blush

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with shame? If all this new awakening of intellectual life and the return of the university to actual conditions is to result only in a more splendid material prosperity and in that accentuated selfishness born of absorption in material interests,—then is not our condition fearfully like that of the son who called for his share of the estate that he might make of it a riotous and prodigal use?

If the return to actual life obscures the vision and paralyzes the arm of service, then were not the atmosphere of the cloister as wholesome as that of the open? Were not the poverty of the opening century, with its love of freedom, infinitely better than the riches of its close, if that close behold only the blinding love of pelf?

It is forever true, young men, that “where there is no vision the people perish.” The crying need of every age is for the man of ideals, and I say that you men who are to shape the life of the twentieth century have the opportunity of re-creating the ideal out of the material in your hands. It is yours to disprove the mediæval fallacy that the life

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of the spirit and of ideals can be nourished only in the cloister. It is yours triumphantly to prove that these material conditions, to which now we are returning with such force, have in them the possibility of transmutation into noble life.

If these tendencies which I have pointed out to-day do actually exist, tendencies indicating that humanity is coming to its better self, coming to the discovery that this is a divine universe and is growing more and more toward a divine humanity, a humanity of love and service, of great aspirations and high ideals,—then I beg of you to throw yourselves into the current of this tendency ; find your inspiration, your hope and your ambition in what it portends. Let it individualize itself in your own lives, so that perchance here to-day, upon one of the epochal days of your lives, you shall find your own hearts responding to the divine call to arise and go to the house of your father,—this great house all around us, in which, for all true and loyal hearts, there is endless opportunity for endless service.









BX Dewhurst, Frederic Eli, 1885-1906.  
7233 Dwellers in tents and other sermons.  
D4 graph ed. Indianapolis, Ind., Bowen-M  
D8 1897.  
227p. 18cm.

"The autograph edition is limited to  
hundred copies; [this is] no. 95".

1. Congregational churches--Sermons

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333735

